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THESIS

AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING:
CONSIDERATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

by

Russell Lee Williams

June 1984

Thesis Advisor:

E.J. Laurance

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Two case studies are then presented. The first deals with how a knowledge of existing public opinion on such general areas as support for defense spending could be used by the Executive branch to obtain support for a particular strategic policy, specifically; arms sales to foreign countries. The second case deals with how a complex strategy related to nuclear deterrence (deployment of the MX missile) was apparently "adjusted" to gain public opinion support. The thesis concludes with a consideration of the implications of the case study findings.

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**American Public Opinion and Strategic Planning:
Considerations and Case Studies**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the impact and importance of public opinion in the American strategic/political planning process. It begins with a discussion of the special role of public opinion in the United States, how it has changed, and how it effects policymakers. After a general consideration of the uniqueness of that relationship, the role of public opinion in determining the "national interest" is examined. Two case studies are then presented. The first deals with how a knowledge of existing public opinion on such general areas as support for defense spending could be used by the Executive branch to obtain support for a particular strategic policy, specifically; arms sales to foreign countries. The second case deals with how a complex strategy related to nuclear deterrence (deployment of the MX missile) was apparently "adjusted" to gain public opinion support. The thesis concludes with a consideration of the implications of the case study findings.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The basis of our government [is] the opinion of the people...

--Thomas Jefferson [Ref. 1: p. 49]

Public opinion in this country is everything.

--Abraham Lincoln [Ref. 2: p. 424]

The President, Mr. Iacocca observed, was involved in "government by poll..."

--New York Times, November 18, 1983 [Ref. 3: p. 14]

From its inception and throughout its history, the impact and importance of public opinion in the policyforming process of the United States has been almost uniquely evident. With the drafting of its constitution, this nation was charged with incorporating the opinions of its citizenry into the functioning of its governmental system [Ref. 4: p.iii]. However, it has only been the developments in the past few decades that have produced the means to fully realize the concept of a government "by the people"; i.e., with the use of public opinion data.

Utilizing public opinion as a precise component of policy input was hampered for many years by the technical requirements of quantification. The government lacked a means to rapidly obtain enough statistically significant and unbiased opinion data. This obviated the immediate value of mounting a collection effort. Concomitantly, the general public also had information acquisition problems. The relatively slow speed with which they were able to obtain information about a subject or event affected whether their opinions were formed on the basis of current information [Ref. 5: pp. 3-5].

Technological advances, such as satellite assisted communications and computer miniaturization, have reduced the time lag problems associated with information transmission and opinion sampling. At the same time, the rise of the Gallup, Roper, and Harris polling organizations (to name just a few) attests to the increased importance assigned to determining the public's opinion on a variety of subjects.

With current public opinion now so accessible to those who make decisions, it must be considered as a factor in U.S. strategic policy planning. To fail to do so creates a situation wherein the government may make decisions that do not reflect a clear understanding of societal needs and concerns [Ref. 6: p. 91].

The aforementioned changes brought about by the continuing improvements in electronics have also had another effect in regard to public opinion. The concept that elite groups or the "attentive public" are the key to gauging public opinion [Ref. 7: p. 39], so often espoused by writers on the subject, must be re-examined. A major conduit of information, the TV news broadcast, has increasingly become an integral part of the American culture [Ref. 8: p. 48]. The "attentive public" has been enlarged because of the increased ability and propensity of TV owners to, in fact, "pay attention".¹ Just what groups constitute the "public" and what role public opinion should play in the policymaking process must be reconsidered because of this.

¹Recently the news program "60 Minutes" (albeit a "soft" news program) reached the top of the TV viewer preference surveys. Information that could impact on public opinion was being transmitted to literally millions of Americans. Information to be received, thought about, believed, acted upon, or rejected. All this on a scale beyond imagination just twenty five years ago. The impact that this increase in the amount of information could have on the U.S. democratic process is dealt with, in a very broad brush manner, by John Naisbitt in Megatrends (New York, N.Y.: Warner Books, Inc., 1982), pp. 11-24, 159-188. See also Charles O. Jones' comments on communications in An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy, 2nd ed. (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury Press, 1977), p. 22.

A. THE "PUBLIC" IN PUBLIC OPINION

As indicated above, there is more than one "public" or group usually considered when talking about the opinion of the public and its impact on policy and strategy. The concept that the "attentive public" is more influential than the "mass public" is often integrated into a paradigm that posits the American democratic process being controlled (or at least influenced) by "elite" groups [Ref. 9: pp. 2-4]. These "elite" groups are generally made up of people with similar interests who by reason of wealth, education, position, or a combination thereof are prepared and able to exert pressure on or within the government.

The existence and influence of these "elites" is readily discernable. Is therefore the possibility of "mass" public opinion also exerting an influence obviated? Does anyone really care about or even listen to "mass" public opinion?

The idea that "mass" public opinion could make a difference in policymaking is not new. The question really is how much of a difference it makes. Alan D. Monroe represents one end of the spectrum of thought on the subject when he states that, "...public opinion is typically a weak force." [Ref. 10: p. 291] W. Lance Bennett, on the other hand, characterizes public opinion as, "...the central regulating mechanism in the political system." [Ref. 11: p. 12] Significantly, however, despite the obvious dichotomy between the two writers, even Monroe admits that, "In the long run, the public almost always gets its way." [Ref. 12: p. 292]

One is left with the impression that the answer to the question concerning the amount of influence wielded by the general public has not been definitively answered. Theories of public opinion impact often depend on how the interworkings of the government are interpreted by the various

authors on the subject. The next section deals with a somewhat different means of ascertaining an answer to the question of the "mass" public's influence.

B. THE ROLE OF "MASS" PUBLIC OPINION

It is beyond the scope of this paper to digress now into a long discussion on how "mass" public opinion fits into the various models of the governmental decisionmaking process.² Instead, we will examine the data obtained in a number of surveys conducted by the Gallup Organization to obtain an estimate of the relative importance and role of public opinion in American policymaking.

1. An "Elite" View of "Mass" Public Opinion

In November and December of 1982, the Gallup Organization conducted a survey of 341 people drawn from what would be considered "elites". Those surveyed were classified as leaders in the Reagan administration, Congress, international business, labor, the news media, religious institutions, academia, foreign policy organizations and special interest groups [Ref. 13: pp. 87-88]. One of the questions asked was:

How important a role do you think the following currently play in determining the foreign policy of the United States--a very important role, a somewhat important role, or hardly an important role at all?
....public opinion...

²The bases for many of the theories on the relative importance of public opinion can be found in the previously referenced books by V.O. Key (Public Opinion and American Democracy) and Gabriel Almond (The American People and Foreign Policy). Floyd H. Allport's article, "Toward a Science of Public Opinion," Public Opinion Quarterly, January 1937, is also particularly useful because of its discussion on the fallacies created by treating public opinion as a monolithic whole. The other works on public opinion cited throughout this presentation also provide information on the question of how much public opinion can affect policy.

Of the elite leaders surveyed, 15 percent classified public opinion as "very important". One would be inclined to evaluate the importance of public opinion as being low based on that level of response. However, consider the data obtained from the following question that was also asked:

Do you feel that the role of the following should be more important than they are now, should be less important than they are now, or should be about as important as they are now?public opinion...

In response to this question, 36 percent of the "elite" felt that public opinion should be "more important".

Taking both responses together, the possibility can be seen to exist that over half of the "elite" may already consider public opinion as a major factor in the policy-forming process. While only 15 percent already thought it was very important, it is logical to assume that the 36 percent who thought it should be more important would be predisposed to make it so. Even if there was an overlap between those responding in favor of public opinion in each case, the fact that "mass" public opinion is an increasingly important factor in the thinking of those acknowledged to control policy still remains clear. At a minimum, as James Best points out, public opinion helps create the agenda of issues that the leadership must address and how that agenda will be handled [Ref. 14: p. 208]. Chapter Three provides an example of that kind of situation.

2. A "Mass" View of "Mass" Public Opinion

The next point to be considered is the public perception of the importance of public opinion. This can give us an indication of the expectations of the American people to which the policymakers must be prepared to respond.

In the aforementioned Gallup Organization survey, a systematic, stratified national sample of 1,547 American men and women [Ref. 15: pp. ix-xi] was also conducted [Ref. 16: pp. 87-88]. The same two questions were asked of this "mass" sample as were asked of the "elite" sample. In the case where public perception of the importance of public opinion in foreign policy determination was measured, 23 percent thought it was "very important". However, 54 percent said that public opinion should have a "more important" role in foreign policy formation than they perceived it to have at the time.

In a similar vein, a 1975 Gallup Poll asked the following question:

If the leaders of our nation followed the views of the public more closely, do you think the nation would be better off, or worse off than it is today? [Ref. 17: p. 575]

In response to this question, 67 percent of those surveyed felt that the nation would be better off, while 16 percent felt it would be worse off. In both Gallup surveys, however, the strong desire is expressed that policymakers pay close attention to public opinion.³

³Implicit in this discussion has been the idea that the "mass" public goes through an opinion forming process. The various theories on that topic have been the focus of a number of scholarly efforts. Many writers include as inputs to the opinion forming process such items as: cultural background, family influence, peer group, personality, educational level, employment, major current events, opinion "leaders", news media input, political party affiliation, and religion; along with a host of other inputs. A detailed discussion of the opinion forming process would in itself be the subject of a rather lengthy presentation. Some of the authors cited elsewhere in this paper who have written on this process are: W. Lance Bennett (Public Opinion in American Politics), Alan D. Monroe (Public Opinion in America), Robert S. Erikson and Norman R. Luttberg (American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact), Walter Lippmann (Public Opinion), James Best (Public Opinion: Micro and Macro), V.O. Key (Public Opinion and American Democracy), and Robert E. Lane and David O. Sears (Public Opinion).

C. CONCLUSIONS & QUESTIONS

It can be seen that policymakers are now faced with a quantifiable public opinion, a level of public awareness, and a degree of public interest unforeseen by the framers of the Constitution. Additionally, the "mass" public now has the expectation that its opinion will be fully considered.

The public's knowledge of issues, however, still tends to be more generalized than that of its federal representatives. Thus, the government is periodically forced to function in situations where its perception or articulation of what is "in the national interest" does not always coincide with public opinion [Ref. 18: pp. 90-91].

The dilemmas this creates for the American system of democracy are many. The three that this paper will consider are:

1) Given the ability to measure the public's opinion, how much weight should it be given in the planning process? In the broadest sense, who determines "the national interest", the government or the people?

2) Given a strategic policy that the public has historically been unwilling to support, are there related issues that could be useful in increasing, or at least predicting, current levels of public approval?

3) Given a situation considered by the policymakers to be too complex for the public to grasp, but too important or visible to be dealt with unobtrusively, how can the support of public opinion be maintained?; or is that support really necessary in such a case?

The next three chapters provide possible answers to these questions. An operational definition of "the national interest" incorporating the influence of public opinion will be offered in Chapter Two. Chapters Three and Four are case studies related to the above questions two and three respectively. Finally, Chapter Five will present conclusions based on the definitions and information set forth in the preceding chapters.

II. WHO DETERMINES THE NATIONAL INTEREST?

Ascertaining who determines the national interest presupposes that a "national interest" exists. It is necessary therefore to define the term.

A. A DEFINITION OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Donald Nuechterlein defines the national interest in the following manner:

The national interest is the perceived needs and desires of one sovereign state in relation to the sovereign states comprising its external environment. [Ref. 19: p. 3]

Unfortunately, he does not clearly explain how the perception of needs actually occurs. However, he then goes on to subdivide the general concept of the national interest into four types of interests: 1) defense; 2) economic; 3) world order; and 4) ideological [Ref. 20: p. 4]. Whatever flaws or inadequacies Nuechterlein's formulation may have, he clearly views the national interest as a tangible, knowable entity. Conceptually, it can and should be used as a policy tool.

Contrast this approach to the national interest with a statement by James N. Rosenau:

In its [the national interest] action usage, the concept lacks both structure and content but, nevertheless, serves its users, political actors, well. As an analytical tool, the concept is more precise and elaborate but, nevertheless, confounds the efforts of its users, political analysts. [Ref. 21: p. 34]

Rosenau interprets the idea of the national interest as an attractive but shopworn concept useful for drumming up political support for specific issues. It is an abstraction with "face validity" that is ultimately unknowable because human values are involved.

Nuechterlein and Rosenau do not present the extreme opposing ends of the spectrum in the conceptualization of the national interest. They do plainly typify the disagreement on the subject. Labels such as "pragmatist", "realist", and "idealist" (to name just a few) which are applied to writers on the subject give an indication of the range and type of discord involved in the debate on this matter.*

*Exploring the concept and literature of the national interest is daunting at best and overwhelming at worst. Aside from the works already cited in this chapter, an examination of the following items is useful for preceiving the intricacies of the concept. Some of the most forceful presentations come from Hans Morgenthau. His writings; "Another 'Great Debate': The National Interest of the United States," The American Political Science Review, December 1952; In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy (New York, N.Y.: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951); and "The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest vs. Moral Abstractions," The American Political Science Review, December 1950; represent important works in the field. A better understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the concept can be found by reading Walter Lippmann, The Public Philosophy (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1954). John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) also treats this area. The idealist vs. realist debate is well summarized in Warner Schilling, "The Clarification of Ends or Which Interest is the National?," World Politics 1956. In that article, Schilling reviews and discusses two other notable works; Robert E. Osgood, Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1953) along with Thomas I. Cook and Malcom Moos, Power Through Purpose: The Realism of Idealism as a Basis for Foreign Policy (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Press, 1954). This writer found the Schilling work, plus two others; Vernon Van Dyke, "Values and Interests," American Political Science Review, Vol. 56, 1962 and Fred A. Sonderman, "The Concept of the National Interest," Orbis, Spring 1977; to be particularly thought provoking. Some may also find Karl R. Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies, 4th ed., revised, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963) and Virginia Held, The Public Interest and Individual Interests (n.p., 1970) to be of value in pulling various concepts together. The above list, by the way, is by no means exhaustive.

Viewing the controversy in a dispassionate manner, it appears that, when considered as an end in itself, the national interest inevitably becomes more of a generality than a set of specific constants. It may be viewed as essentially consisting of the six classic elements of national identity: territory, population, economic system, political/administrative system, military system, and value system. However, added to these is the human element [Ref. 22: p. 256].

Individuals or groups of individuals place different definitions on and assign different relative weights to the importance of each of the six elements. This is particularly true when it is desired to maintain, at a minimum, the nation's current status quo or, in other cases, gain the ascendancy of particular goals. This leavening process creates a conceptual construct that expands in strange and unexpected ways when baked in the oven of public opinion and debate. Attempts to interpret what the national interest is from solely idealistic or realistic points of view generally lead to unsatisfactory results.

Yet, the elements of the national interest pervade all segments of the American system of governance. Because of this, as Rosenau notes [Ref. 23: p. 39], attempts to analyze it cannot be dismissed as wholly unproductive.

The problem in defining the national interest may come from the implicit assumption by many that it somehow can be permanently quantified. That is to say that America's national interest can be stated in a few lines in a dictionary with an occasional change noted in successive publishings; just like any other bit of terminology.

This type of defining process appears to be of little long term value. Even with all the discussion and debate, no one who has "defined" the national interest has escaped the need to insert some sort of interpretive process, no

matter how obliquely, into the "definition". There is always some element of "it depends" in the interpretation.

Because of this, it seems logical to find another means to frame the concept of the national interest. If it cannot be satisfactorily described as an end, perhaps it should be considered as a means to an end.

B. THE NATIONAL INTEREST AS A PROCESS

To define the national interest as a means rather than an end, as a process rather than an outcome, may seem dissatisfying. It removes the possibility of achieving a quick or constant answer. However, since the structure of the American democratic system is itself a dynamic, everchanging process, it is reasonable to assume that the national interest of the nation it underlies should share those same attributes.

Consider the following hypothesis:

The national interest is determined by a policymaking process which satisfies national needs as defined by the problematic context, in a legitimate⁵ manner, resulting in domestic compliance.*

⁵The concept of "legitimacy" is yet another realm that can be explored at length in its own right. A good overall discussion of the subject was written by Dolf Sternberger in "Legitimacy," International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, Vol. 9, David L. Sills, ed., (n.p.: Crowell, Collier and Macmillan, Inc. and Free Press, Inc., 1968), pp. 244-248. A excellent bibliography concludes his treatment of the topic. See also Charles F. Kriete, Chaplain (Colonel), U.S. Army in "The Moral Dimension of Strategy," Parameters: Journal of the U.S. Army War College, February 1977. Briefly though, it would seem that quantified public opinion provides the policymakers with a tool for determining the degree of legitimacy that is afforded their policies by the general population.

*The author is indebted to Professor Frank Teti of the Naval Postgraduate School for the basis of this hypothesis.

Does this do a better job of defining the national interest than some other constructs?

As pointed out earlier, a major deficiency in most definitions of national interest is the inability to make allowance for the "it depends" factor. In the above hypothesis, the national interest is fluid. The policymakers are free to make and change policy as they see fit. They must however do so in such a manner so as to satisfy national needs.

How are national needs determined? In a democratic society, the "will of the governed" must be known, for it is the people who constitute the nation. If policies are considered by the people to be non-legitimate nor in their own long term best interests, then some form of unrest (i.e., a loss of domestic compliance) will occur.

A quick look at American "compliance" during the age of Prohibition shows clearly what can occur. Policymakers of that time did not appreciate the consequences of the failure to fully understand the national needs. The lesson was painfully taught to the government again during the later years of the Vietnam conflict, when the public as a whole became disenchanted with administration policies [Ref. 24: pp. 23-25].

It is the necessity to capture the intricacies of the American culture that the proposed definition is designed to reflect. Single issue oriented and/or rigid definitions of the national interest lead to problems when attempting to apply them to policy decisions in a complex environment.

The classic schools of thought on how to determine the national interest fall prey to their own inflexibility. An example is the use of morality as the underlying means for determining it. As Paul Seabury points out, the use of this broad, difficult to define concept creates a situation wherein simplistic solutions are sought to a complex problem

[Ref. 25: p. 13]. Such simplicity does not point the way clearly when dealing with a country whose concept of morality differs from that of the U.S. The furor surrounding the recent Soviet downing of a Korean commercial airliner attests to this.

Similarly, definitions of the national interest based on such diverse concepts as "realpolitik" and idealism also have problems of flexibility. Concepts such as these are often beset with internal contradictions or excessive subcategorization [Ref. 26: pp. 570, 576-577], caused by the failure to compensate for the current mood of the people.

The "process" definition of the national interest shall therefore underlie the remainder of this presentation. This is not to say that the definition is perfect. Rather, of the myriad of definitions in existence, this one offers a means of continuous evaluation as to whether the national interest is being served. There is no need for caveats nor categories, merely a knowledge that the needs of the majority and therefore the needs of the nation are perceived by the people themselves as being met legitimately.

C. PUBLIC OPINION & THE NATIONAL INTEREST

The aforementioned definition of the national interest leads again to a recognition of the role of public opinion. If the policymakers are to map out strategies for the accomplishment of certain goals, they must increasingly obtain at least the tacit approval of the public.

Inevitably, there will be layers of bureaucracy and interest groups insulating the upper reaches of government from the people [Ref. 27: pp. 4-5]. It may also be contended that national strategy will be planned,

interpreted, or executed on the basis of one person's or group's desire to gain or maintain power or prestige [Ref. 28: pp. 184-185, 188].

Strategic planning and policymaking are definitely influenced by the personalities of those constituting the vanguard of the government. This can be a particularly strong factor in organizations such as the National Security Council, where the personal styles of the President and his principal advisors have always dictated the way the NSC has functioned [Ref. 29].

Yet despite these intervening factors, for decision-makers to incorrectly perceive or ignore the public mood is to court disaster. As James Best puts it:

...public opinion serves to define how political issues are to be resolved and to define in broad terms the types of issues to be dealt with, the range of alternatives which are "acceptable", and the range of criteria to be used for choosing between the alternatives. In addition, public opinion grants legitimacy to the people who make those decisions and the rules under which they operate. [Ref. 30: p. 256]

This statement, is supported by more recent findings that there,

...is a growing body of evidence that rough congruences do exist between public views (as captured in opinion polls) and the course of national policy, particularly when trends in the two are compared over time... [Ref. 31: p. 218]

D. CONCLUSIONS

The answer to the question: "Who determines the national interest?" is therefore as complicated as the answer to what the national interest is. The implication can be drawn that no one directly determines the national

interest. Specifics are hard to come by. The unsatisfying requirement to make a definition in terms of a "process" again appears. Intuitively however, one wants to assign responsibility to someone or something in particular for deciding what the basis of policymaking action will be.

A synthesis of the "process" definition of the national interest and Best's statement on the role of public opinion gives the following answer to the question of who shoulders the responsibility. The national interest is ultimately determined by the policymakers' interpretation of the general moods and needs of the public.

Arguments to the contrary, often based on reasoning such as, "the president determines the national interest and the public will follow his lead," are not well supported. It is probable that the president can influence national moods [Ref. 32: p. 232]. However, a recent survey indicated that almost two thirds of the public (63%) felt that presidents were given excessive freedom in determining the nation's interests [Ref. 33: p. 223].

As was the case with defining the national interest itself then, the aforementioned synthesis is not a neat and satisfying concept. The situation created is inherently unstable. No one is clearly separated from the process. The assignment of responsibility is fuzzy.

This is, however, the "American way". The decision-makers take action at their own risk. If they can continuously or finally convince the public that their actions and policies are in the national interest, then they will be able to continue in power. Policies which do not gain public approval will ultimately fail. This concept was once expressed by Abraham Lincoln in the following way:

No policy that does not rest upon some philosophical public opinion can be permanently maintained [Ref. 34: p. 265]

On the other hand, if the public does not feel that its interests are being served, another responsibility must be fulfilled. The people must respond in such a manner (i.e., change their degree of domestic compliance) so as to cause the decisionmakers to modify their policies.

It is no longer absolutely necessary, however, to wait for elections or stage demonstrations in order to express a desire for change that cannot be ignored. Public opinion polls provide the various organs of government with a quick indicator of the public mood on almost any subject. The government is then faced with the problem of how to respond to that input.

If public opinion cannot be ignored, the policymakers must then find some means to gain support for heretofore unpopular policies. Chapter Three presents a case study which addresses the second of the three questions posed in Chapter One. If the correct associated issues are identified, the possibility for increasing public support for an historically unpopular policy does exist.

III. INCREASING PUBLIC OPINION SUPPORT--THE ARMS SALES CASE

The sale of American weapons to foreign countries, a controversial but integral facet of the strategic policy embodied in the concept of security assistance, will be the focal point of this case study. It is the element of controversy that makes an examination of this case useful, for it reveals some of the intricacies associated with gaining public opinion support for unpopular policies.

Summarizing public opinion support for arms sales, Andrew J. Pierre stated that:

The American public, it should be noted, has been less than enthusiastic about the high level of U.S. arms sales achieved in recent years.⁷ Public opinion polls have consistently supported greater restraint. Indeed, the largest portion of responses to polls taken in the late 1970s stated fairly routinely that as a general policy the United States should not sell weapons to other countries at all. [Ref. 35: p. 71] (footnote added)

This indicates that, overall, public opinion concerning arms sales would be at odds with the Reagan Administration's recently emphasized policy of expanding and strengthening the security assistance program [Ref. 36: p. I-15], and that this aversion has existed for some time. How then can this, or any, administration increase the generally low public support for arms sales?

⁷This comment is consistent with what some authors characterize as a "merchants of death" syndrome. It appears that for various historical and sociological reasons, the American public is uneasy about manufacturing and selling "war weapons". Some of this may be attributed to the unpleasant idea that businessmen (arms manufacturers and dealers) can profit by aiding in the destruction of human life. See Richard F. Kaufman's The War Profiteers (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1972) and Merchants of Death, A Study of the International Armament Industry by H.C. Engelbrecht and F.C. Hanighen (New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1934) for background on this subject.

A. HYPOTHESIS

This question can be effectively examined in the following manner: 1) define a possible hypothesis; 2) identify a baseline data set; 3) review existing survey data; 4) list significant events which may have influenced public thinking; 5) project how those events may have effected the survey results and; 6) evaluate the proposed hypothesis and speculate on any policy planning implications that may have been brought to light.

To begin, the following hypothesis is offered for consideration:

U.S. public attitudes towards arms sales are directly related to perceptions concerning the state of East-West relations: i.e., if tensions with the East (specifically the USSR) are perceived to be high, support for arms sales will also be high.

This hypothesis focuses on only one of the strategic objectives of current security assistance policy ("Establishing opportunities for United States influence abroad and minimizing Soviet and Soviet-surrogate influence.") [Ref. 37: p. 15], and avoids, for the moment, other more tenuous arguments related to the "economic benefits" of arms sales such as increased job opportunities for Americans. It includes an independent variable (perceptions of tensions) on which the public has received information as the result of regular media coverage. Opinions on the subject are therefore likely to have been formed by most people, making meaningful surveys possible. The dependent variable (support for arms sales) has also received regular media attention, and while the ramifications of arms sales are complex, the concept itself seems simple to grasp. It also therefore lends itself well to being used in survey format questions.

In order to test the hypothesis, a direct measure of public attitudes toward arms sales is necessary. The Roper Organization, Inc., has asked the following question in 1975, 1976, 1978, 1980 and 1981:

The United States has been selling arms and weapons to a number of countries in various parts of the world. Some people say this is a mistake because it encourages other nations to make war. Others say these nations can and will buy arms from someone else if we don't sell them, and if we are their source of arms supplies we have more control over what they get and how they are used. How do you feel---that as a general policy the United States should or should not sell arms and weapons to other nations? [Ref. 38] (emphasis added)

Respondents answered affirmatively, negatively, expressed no opinion, or volunteered a qualified approval ("It depends on to whom sold.").

The data set this survey series provided was used to construct the baseline of comparison in this paper because: 1) the same question was asked by the same organization over a period of years; 2) the temporal domain covered several changes in administration and; 3) it was consistent with the hypothesis. It should also be noted that the starting date of 1975 comes just after the start of serious Congressional efforts to gain some measure of control over the arms sale process [Ref. 39: pp. 9-10], raising both media attention and public awareness of the situation.

We now turn to a consideration of the survey data.

B. PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY DATA

This section is divided into three major sections of public opinion survey data which relate to the stated hypothesis. A discussion of the possible impact in each instance, along with an explanation of methodology where necessary, accompanies the quoted survey data. (Frequency polygon graphs summarizing the data are displayed later in this presentation.)

1. Arms Sales Data--Dependent Variable

The baseline data for public opinion on arms sales was obtained, as previously noted, by the Roper Organization. In response to the above quoted question, data was recorded annually as follows (all data in percentages):

	1981	1980	1978	1976	1975
U.S. SHOULD SELL ARMS	37	40	28	28	32
U.S. SHOULD NOT SELL ARMS	35	35	48	45	50
IT DEPENDS ON TO WHOM SOLD	21	20	17	18	13
DON'T KNOW	5	5	7	8	6

During the same survey series, the following question was also asked with the noted percentage of responses:

You may have differing opinions about selling arms and weapons to certain specific countries. Here is a list of some different countries....Would you go down the list and for each one tell me whether you think the United States should or should not sell them arms? (data listed below is for 1981)

	SHOULD	SHOULD NOT	MIXED FEELINGS	DON'T KNOW
A. England	68	22	4	6
K. West Germany	46	37	7	10
D. Israel	41	39	12	8
B. Egypt	39	40	12	9
E. Japan	38	46	7	9
C. China	25	56	10	10
G. Saudi Arabia	22	58	9	11
J. Argentina	20	56	9	16
H. South Africa	20	57	10	13
F. Pakistan	18	58	9	15
I. El Salvador	15	63	9	13

--Data in preceding years referring to support for sales sales to specific countries (SHOULD sell to) is as follows:

	1980	1978	1976	1975
A. England	70	56	58	52
K. West Germany	52	38	37	37
D. Israel	49	36	37	38
B. Egypt	45	24	*	*
E. Japan	44	29	30	31
C. China	*	*	*	*
G. Saudi Arabia	27	19	17	*
J. Argentina	*	*	*	*
H. South Africa	*	*	*	*
F. Pakistan	26	*	*	*
I. El Salvador	*	*	*	*

(* = question not asked)

2. State of East-West Relations--Independent Variable

To test the hypothesis, the arms sales opinion data must be compared with a measure of public opinion related to the rest of the hypothesis. In determining whether those surveyed perceived "tensions with the East" to be high during the baseline years, their responses to the following question was considered.

You will notice the (10) boxes go from the highest position of "plus 5" for a country which you like very much (or you have a very favorable opinion of) to (all the way down to) a position of (the lowest position of) "minus 5" for a country you dislike very much (have a very unfavorable opinion of). How far up the scale or how far down the scale would you rate the following countries? Russia (or the Soviet Union)... [Ref. 40: p. 180]

Using data taken early in 1982 and 1979 respectively and attributing it to the preceding (unsurveyed) years, the following opinion table reflecting the American public's opinion of the USSR for the baseline years was compiled (all data in percentages):

	1981	1980	1978	1976	1975
FAVORABLE	7.3	4	13.5	8	18.7
MIXED	31.5	23	37.6	33.9	45.2
UNFAVORABLE	61	73	48.9	58.1	36.1

3. Alternative Independent Variables

As previously noted, the American public's access to information and the impact of that information on opinion is considerable. Therefore, restricting the consideration of the test hypothesis' dependent variable to correlation with a single independent variable would be foolish. There are too many other factors that may have influenced the public's opinion [Ref. 41: p. 75]. It would, however, be impractical to consider every possible variable (either independent or intervening) that might impinge on the public attitude regarding arms sales. Only a sampling of those factors which may have logical relevance are explored below.

a. Defense/Military Issues

Many polling organizations list arms related survey data under the heading of defense or military issues. Assuming that the public might categorize arms sales in the same manner, it is prudent to examine public opinion data referring to some general defense/military issues and compare it with the baseline data. Two data sets in those areas follow.

a. The following question was asked during the baseline years:

I would like to get your opinion on several areas of important government activities. As I read each one, please tell me if you would like the government to do more, do less, or do about the same as they have been on....defense. [Ref. 42: p. 32] (All data in percentages as interpreted from graphs.)

	1981	1980	1978	1976	1975
SHOULD DO MORE	61	71	47	47	32
SHOULD DO LESS	12	9	16	15	23
DO THE SAME	25	19	35	37	40

b. The following question was asked during 1980, 1979, 1978, and 1976. (Data listed for 1981 and 1975 is based on graphed trends apparent from available data. Data listed is for baseline years only and is in percentages.):

In general do you feel that the military defense system of the United States is stronger than that of the Russians, weaker, or about as strong as the Russian military defense system? [Ref. 43: p. 129]

	1981	1980	1978	1976	1975
STRONGER	17	15	14	21	33
WEAKER	42	41	40	27	33
ABOUT AS STRONG	39	38	42	47	40

b. Foreign Affairs Issue

Another area which might pertain to public support for arms sales to other countries is general concern over such things as "foreign affairs" or "the economy." In the first case, the public may see arms sales as an issue related to foreign affairs because of the buyers involved. Economic concerns, on the other hand, may be only obliquely tied to arms sales opinion, but cannot be discounted as a factor in any issue confronting Americans.

The following question was asked during the baseline years. (Data is listed by percentages and is quoted for two categories only.):

What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today? [Ref. 44]

	1981	1980	1978	1976	1975
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	7	52	9	5	5
ECONOMY	65	43	57	70	80

c. Concern over War/Less Peace Issue

The public's concern over the possibility of war or the unlikeliness of peace might also be related to the willingness to sell arms overseas. Such sales could be seen as "adding fuel to the fire" or as a means of increasing American security or they may not impact at all.

The various surveys on expectations of violent discord tend to be more indicative of the general mood rather than positions on more specific situations. Concern over war is the kind of subject more often considered by a respondent only when questioned directly about it. Responses to such a question therefore tend to reflect the general perception or mood concerning the world situation. James Best contends that such a mood can crystalize into positions on specific issues [Ref. 45: pp. 160-161].

Logically, a measurement of mood may then be of use in estimating public opinion on a specific issue.

To obtain a "public mood" data set for the base-line years, the information from three survey questions has been merged. Percentages listed are either as noted in the source or as interpreted from graphs. Categories such as "VERY LIKELY" and "SOMEWHAT LIKELY" are combined. When monthly surveys were taken during a given year, the data for the last month the survey was conducted is listed. When graphed on a frequency polygon (see Figure 3.4), all data will be merged on one line. Overlapping data points will be averaged:

a. Do you think there is a likelihood of a foreign country, such as Russia, attacking the United States in the next 20 years, or not? [Ref. 46: p. 329]

	1981
IS LIKELY	63
NOT LIKELY	32
NOT SURE	4

b. How likely is it that the United States will become involved in a war during the next three years? [Ref. 47: p. 21]

	1980	1978
WAR LIKELY	85	44
NOT LIKELY AT ALL	16	56

c. Which of these do you think is likely to be true of 19__? [Ref. 48: p. 127]

	1980	1978	1975
PEACEFUL	14	35	29
TROUBLED	80	45	61
NO OPINION	6	20	10

(NOTE: No opinion surveys regarding the war issue in general were found for 1976, perhaps because the presidential election was the major issue of the time.)

C. SIGNIFICANT EVENTS CHRONOLOGY

There is a great deal of evidence to indicate that public opinion remains fairly consistent over long periods of time [Ref. 49: pp. 253-259]. However, the public's opinion can be altered by events of such significance that the public takes note of them [Ref. 50]. Events related to the statistical data in Chapter Three which may have had an impact on attitudes toward arms sales and/or the various independent variables suggested in this paper are listed by year below.

1974

*June 14-16 Nelson Amendment is offered in the House, placing restrictions on arms sales based on human rights issues.

1975

February 3 51.9 billion dollar budget deficit projected for fiscal 1976.

March 22 Kissenger suspends shuttle diplomacy between Israel and Egypt.

April 3 President Ford says Vietnam setback should not be taken as a sign of U.S. weakness.

April 30 South Vietnam falls.

*May 12-15 Mayaguez incident.

July 2 White House says President Ford did not meet Aleksander Solzhenitsyn on grounds it would endanger "detente".

July 15 APOLLO and SOYUZ spacecraft take off for first U.S.-Soviet space link-up.

July 30 President Ford signs Helsinki Charter.

September 27 OPEC raises oil prices 10% as of Oct. 1.

November 2 President Ford dismisses Secretary of Defense Schesinger, names Rumsfeld to post.

December 1-4 President Ford meets with Chinese leaders in Beijing.

1976

January 1 President Ford suggests campaign themes of peace through strength, improved economy, political freedom.

January 25 House cuts off aid to pro-Western factions in Angolan civil war.

April 10 U.S. and USSR agree on a treaty limiting the size of underground nuclear tests for peaceful purposes.

April 19 President Ford says it would be "irresponsible" to terminate Panama Canal negotiations.

July 4 -200th anniversary celebration for U.S.
-Israelis stage Entebbe raid.

July 14 Jimmy Carter becomes Democratic presidential nominee.

August 18 President Ford nominated by Republicans to oppose Carter.

November 2 -Carter elected president.
-*Arms sales had been a campaign issue.

1977

February 8 President Carter offers plan for agreement with the Soviet Union on a ceiling for strategic weapons.

*May 19 President Carter announces new arms sales policy.

June 30 President Carter announces his opposition to production of the B-1 strategic bomber.

August 10 U.S. and Panama reach basic agreement on a new canal treaty.

October 4 President Carter states that the U.S. will cut atomic weapons by 50% if the Soviets will do the same.

1978

January 4 Decline of dollar halted temporarily.

January 24 Soviet nuclear powered spy satellite breaks up over Canada.

February 3 Civil war begins in Nicaragua.

February 14 U.S. to sell warplanes to Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia.

March 14 Israelis invade Lebanon to attack Palestinian guerillas.

March 28 Consumer prices up, especially for food.

March 31 Record trade deficit announced.

April 7 President Carter defers neutron bomb production.

May 15 After intense lobbying by the President, the Senate approves the Middle East warplane sale.

June 7 President Carter, in a speech at Annapolis, warns Soviets to end confrontations with the U.S.

June 30 Carter Administration cancels sale of sixty F-4 aircraft to Taiwan.

July 28 Consumer prices rising at an 11.4% rate.

August 17 President Carter vetoes 36 billion dollar weapons bill.

September 17 Mideast summit at Camp David produces peace accords.

October 20 Stock market has worst week in history.

November 6 Massive anti-government demonstrations continue in Iran.

December 15 U.S. formally recognizes the PRC, recognition of Taiwan to be withdrawn.

December 18 OPEC announces 14.5% oil price increase.

December 23 An American is killed in Iran during antigovernment violence.

1979

January 16 The Shah leaves Iran.

January 30 -Ayatollah Khomeini is authorized to return from exile in France to Iran.
-U.S. orders evacuation of American dependents and non-essential personnel from Iran.

February 1 U.S. reports that Soviets are testing a long range cruise missile fired from the Backfire bomber.

February 14 U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Adolph Dubs is killed by Afghan Moslem rebels.

March 7 U.S. sends arms and military aid to North Yemen to aid that country in border fighting with South Yemen.

March 23 C.P.I. up 1.2% in February.

March 26 Egypt and Israel sign a formal peace treaty.

April 4 President Carter launches effort to have SALT II ratified.

June 7 President Carter approves the development of a new mobile ICBM.

July 19 Sandanistas take control of Nicaragua.

September 7 -President Carter announces "racetrack" basing mode for the MX.
 -President Carter warns USSR about adverse effects on relations because of Soviet troops in Cuba.

September 11 President Carter asks for increased military spending.

November 4 U.S. Embassy seized in Tehran.

December 15 Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar raise their oil prices by 33%.

December 27 Soviet Union invades Afghanistan.

1980

*January 1-6 Soviets denounce U.S. actions in wake of Afghanistan invasion.

*January 3 U.S. approves arms sales to Taiwan.

*January 4 FX aircraft production approved by President Carter as being in the national interest.

January 12 U.S. offers economic and military assistance to Pakistan in wake of Soviet Afghan invasion. Offer is rejected on January 17 on grounds that a larger amount of aid was needed than was offered.

*January 14 UN General Assembly condemns USSR for Afghan invasion.

January 23 President Carter, in State of the Union message, says U.S. will go to war to protect Persian Gulf oil supply routes.

January 25 Labor Department reports that consumer prices rose 13.3% in 1979, the largest annual increase in thirty-three years.

*January 28 Defense budget is increased.

*January 29 President Carter says U.S. cannot defend Persian Gulf unilaterally.

*January 30 Six US diplomats return to U.S. after escaping from Iran with Canadian help.

*February 1 Presidential campaigning in full swing.

*February 20 Soviets ignore President Carter's demand that they leave Afghanistan.

February 25 President Carter admits that inflation has "reached a crisis stage."

*March 14 President Carter hints shift in SALT II policy.

April 7 U.S. cuts diplomatic relations with Iran.

*April 17 Defense spending cut announced.

April 24 U.S. attempt to rescue Iranian hostages fails. Eight military personnel killed.

*May 6 Previously announced MX basing mode changed.

June 10 OPEC raises crude oil prices.

June 27 President Carter approves a peacetime draft registration funding bill.

*June 30 Commerce Department reports drop in leading economic indicators.

*July 1 President Carter sends weapons to Thailand after Vietnamese attack.

*July 8 68 senators indicate opposition to plan to sell advanced F-15 equipment to Saudi Arabia.

July 14-17 Reagan nominated by Republicans as presidential candidate.

August 5 U.S. announces a new strategy for nuclear war based on "counterforce" rather than "countervalue" targeting.

August 11-14 President Carter nominated by Democrats to run for a second term.

*August (mid) Defense reinterated by presidential candidates as a major issue.

*September 22 Iran-Iraq conflict flares into open warfare.

October 28 Televised Reagan-Carter debate. *Peace and economy among major topics.

November 4 Reagan elected president. *Republicans to gain control of the Senate.

November 21 By a 73 to 1 vote the Senate passes the largest (\$151 billion) peace or wartime defense money bill.

December 5 U.S. suspends new economic and military aid to El Salvador after four Americans are killed there.

December 19 Prime interest rate hits a record 21.5%

1981

January 16 -President Carter sends 5 billion dollars in combat equipment to El Salvador as leftist revolutionaries appear to be receiving outside aid.
-In final State of the Union message, President Carter says U.S. faces serious problems, deplores Soviet threat to Poland, and defends SALT II treaty.

January 20 -Ronald Reagan becomes president.
-U.S. hostages in Iran are released.

February 18	President Reagan proposes budget cuts in all areas except for defense.
March 2	State Department declares it will expand military assistance to El Salvador.
March 30	President Reagan is shot and wounded.
July 8	President Reagan announces new arms sale policy.
August 6	President Reagan decides to go ahead with full production of neutron weapons.
August 19	U.S. Navy jets shoot down attacking Libyan aircraft in the Gulf of Sidra.
September 23	Defense Secretary Weinberger outlines a three-year, 13 billion dollar defense budget cut.
October 2	-Unemployment rises to 7.5%. -President Reagan rejects the mobile MX basing plan.
October 6	President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt is assassinated.
December 12	Martial law is declared in Poland.

(Except where noted by an *, all above items were excerpted and adapted from the Chronology section of the Gallup Poll for the applicable year, published by Scholarly Resources Inc. of Wilmington, Delaware. All other items were adapted from general news sources.)

D. DATA INTERPRETATION

As noted in a previous public opinion versus policy study [Ref. 51: pp. 146-149], the analysis of data such as that presented in section B has usually been limited to "short term " or "spot" studies related to specific events. This creates a relative paucity of baseline data points, making it impractical to apply some of the more powerful tools of statistical analysis. The use of the frequency polygon, however, does make it possible to detect possible trends.

Frequency polygon graphs displaying portions of the preceding survey data sets are therefore presented with their applicable sections as Figures 3.1 through 3.4.

(Years enclosed by brackets are shown only for time line continuity purposes and no data points are indicated for them.) While not necessarily useful from the purely predictive sense, they can give clues to what may influence the public to view a specific issue either favorably or unfavorably.

For example, an examination of Figure 3.1 should reveal if the previously stated hypothesis is generally true; i.e., whether the trend line reflecting unfavorable public opinion toward Russia is similar in slope to the trend line relating to arms sales approval. Additionally, by checking the graphs, it should be apparent if some other factor(s) might be useful in gauging public support for arms sales.

1. Arms Sales Opinion vs USSR/Tension Perception

It is readily visible upon examination of Figure 3.1 that prior to 1976 there was no positive correlation between public support for arms sales in general and attitudes toward the Soviet Union. After 1978, however, a positive correlation appears to occur. How may events have effected the trend lines?

a. Public Support for Arms Sales

The chronology presented earlier indicates that the Nelson Amendment concerning U.S. arms sales and human rights was offered in 1974. This was the subject of extensive media coverage and public attention at that time. Starting with this initial negative input, public support for arms sales declined (according to Figure 3.1) during the period 1975 through 1978. Additionally, in the early part (1975-1976) of that period, presidential hopeful, and later Democratic presidential nominee Jimmy Carter made an issue of the morality of U.S. arms sales [Ref. 52: p. 125]. After Carter's election as president, the policy of

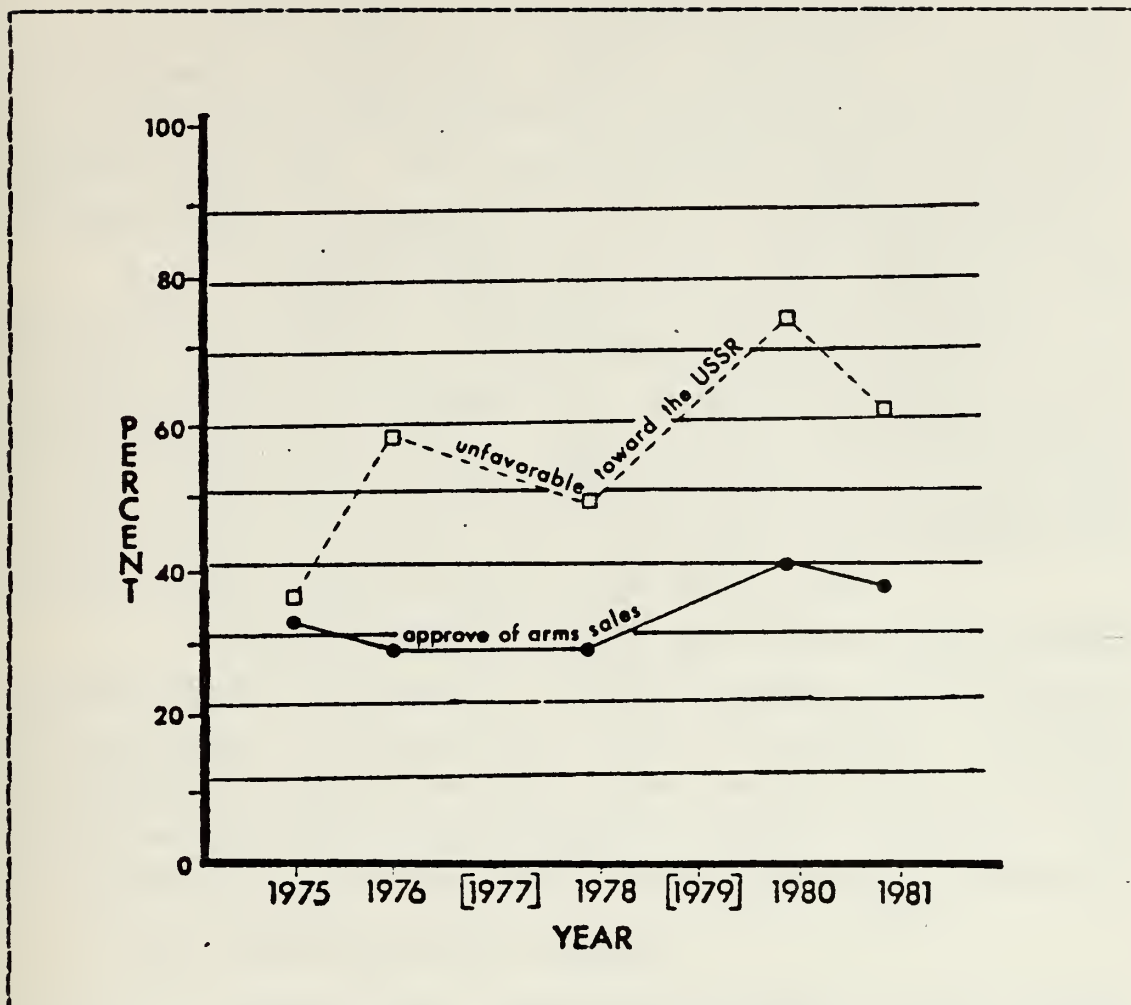


Figure 3.1 Sales Support/USSR Opinion Graph.

unilateral restraint in arms sales based largely on human rights considerations was firmly stated in 1977 [Ref. 53: p. 11]. Public support for arms sales rose, however, through 1980 as the Carter Administration tied arms sales to the peace process in the Middle East and as arms were sent to North Yemen to control border fighting. Additionally, arms were sent to Thailand in 1980 after a Vietnamese attack on that country. The subject of human rights was not strongly pursued during these sales despite the authoritarian regimes often involved.

Arms sales to El Salvador did become a subject of controversy towards the end of the Carter Presidency, with human rights considerations conflicting with fears of a Communist takeover. How consistently the Carter arms policy was being applied became the subject of heated discussion.

President Reagan then came into office in 1981. Soon after, a change in arms sales policy was announced. It was deemed necessary that such sales be based largely on the precepts of aid to allies and strengthening of security relationships [Ref. 54: p. 15]. While this stated policy was not popular with human rights activists, it was more reflective of the policy that the Carter Administration had actually found it necessary in the past to use.

The high visibility of arms sales policy between 1975 and 1981 is attested to by the frequency with which it was mentioned in Presidential policy statements. However, the change in opinion over the time period cannot be wholly attributed to policy pronouncements, since, as noted, the U.S. government's actions did not always match its rhetoric.

b. Attitudes toward Russia

Looking for incidents related to the Soviet "unfavorable" rating line, it can be seen that in 1975 (as shown by the joint American/Soviet space mission), "detente" was in full bloom and approval of the Soviets was relatively high.

With 1976 came the conflict in Angola. When a Soviet-backed faction took control while the U.S. cut off aid to the pro-Western forces, public opinion was influenced.

Although a Soviet nuclear powered spy satellite fell on Canada in 1978 and the Carter Administration was talking about Soviet confrontation problems, the Mideast had now become the center of concern. That area continued to

dominate public concern during 1979. At the end of that year, however, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

That action explains the largely negative reaction to Russia during 1980. This was reinforced by the many policy decisions (such as the Olympic boycott) that were made because of the invasion.

By 1981, the election of a more conservative and outspokenly anti-Soviet president could also have affected overall opinion about Russia, keeping disapproval high. Soviet actions in Poland at the time were also well noted by the public. However, concern shifted away from the Soviets and toward Central America by the end of the year due to the upheavals occurring in that area.

The above historical overview is by no means exhaustive. Other factors certainly must have influenced public opinion on the USSR during this period. Obviously though, it is easy to see a number of reasons why opinion fluctuated as it did during the baseline years.

c. Interpretation

Relating the preceding to the proposed hypothesis, one can see that a consistent correlation of the dependent and independent variables does not occur nor does it appear that any easily discernable factors skewed what would otherwise have been consistent trends. The degree to which the public perceives a high level of tension with the East is apparently not a reliable indicator of public opinion on arms sales.

To recast the original hypothesis into something useful, it is now necessary to examine the other possible independent variables suggested earlier to see if a common thread can be found.

2. Defense/Military Issues as Indicators

Questions concerning arms sales are usually found in those sections of public opinion surveys dealing with defense or military matters. One might assume that a functional variant of the originally stated arms sales support hypothesis might be found in those areas, i.e., support for arms sales might increase when it is felt that the government should do more for defense or if the U.S. is perceived to be militarily weaker than the USSR.

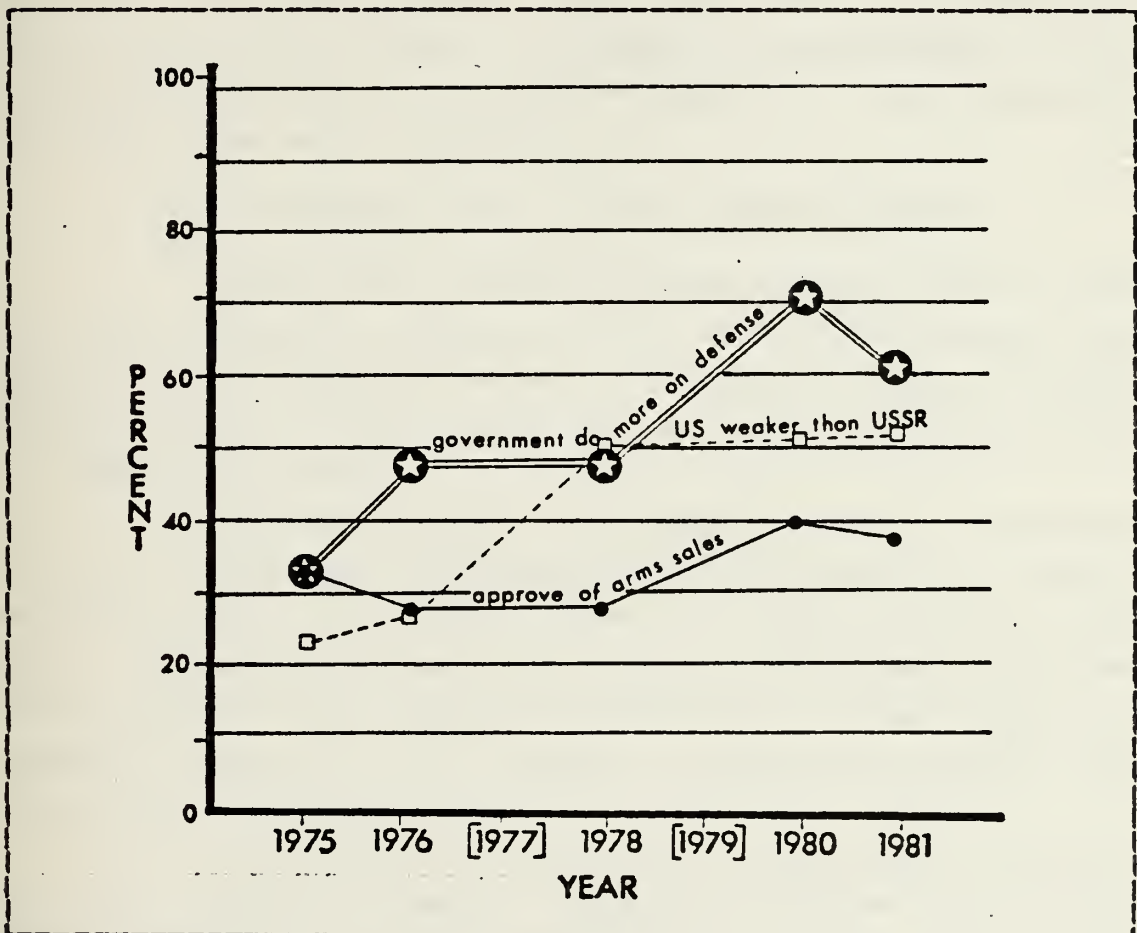


Figure 3.2 Sales Support/More Defense/US Weakness Graph.

a. Perception of U.S. Military Weakness

Beginning with military force perception, it can be seen in Figure 3.2 that prior to 1978 the correlation between support for arms sales and the public perception that the U.S. as militarily weaker than the USSR was, if anything, negative. After 1978, while the two trends begin to move in similar directions, the degree of change is much more pronounced in the arms sales trend line between 1978 and 1980.

Significantly, the perception of U.S. weakness does not match the perception that more should be done about defense (see next topic). However, perceptions of U.S. military weakness do not seem to serve as a good indicator of public arms sales support.

b. Government Should Do More About Defense

Aside from a sharp divergence from 1975 to 1976, the trend lines in Figure 3.2 for arms sales support and support for increased government efforts on defense display roughly similar slopes. The reason for the divergence can be readily explained.

During the 1976 presidential race, President Ford had made strengthening national defense an issue, possibly leading to a higher level of public concern in that area. During his campaign and after his election, President Carter specifically emphasized the issue of arms sales as a negative component of U.S. policy. Conflicting signals were being sent to the public.

The crisis in Iran and the Afghanistan invasion, plus the raising of issues attendant with the 1980 presidential campaign) probably served as the impetus for the rise in concern over defense efforts. Arms sales support also rose during this period.

Ronald Reagan's subsequent election to president with a commitment to increase defense spending then allowed public attention to move on to other areas. Interest in defense spending increases thereafter declined as the problem was perceived to be "taken care of." As can be seen, arms sales support also started to decline in 1981.

c. Interpretation

Public concern over defense efforts appears to be a good indicator of public support for arms sales. A "lumping together" of some defense issues in the public mind apparently does occur, implicitly strengthening support for arms sales if concern over the level of defense efforts rises in general. To determine why the desire to see greater emphasis on defense does not match the perception of U.S. military weakness is beyond the scope of this paper.

In any event, support for the government to do more on defense is not necessarily the only or best indicator of arms sales support. The remaining variables must still be examined to determine if they also have value as indicators.

3. "National Problems" as Indicators

Surveys measuring concern about foreign affairs or the economy offer another useful means to measure the "mood" of the public (see subsubsection III-B-3c). Public perceptions on these very general topics should be examined to see if they can serve as indicators to opinion on the narrower subject of arms sales.

a. Foreign Affairs Concerns

Despite such happenings in 1975 as the Mayaguez incident or the 1975-1976 Angolan civil war, public concern for foreign affairs remained extremely low until the twin

shocks of Iran and Afghanistan. Foreign affairs concern peaked in 1980 and then fell to its "normal" (and far lower) level in 1981. (See Figure 3.3 below.)

While both U.S. presidential campaigns during the data base period raised issues relating to foreign affairs, it appears that only discrete events outside the country were able to pique the public's concern. This difficulty in arousing U.S. public interest in foreign affairs without some sort of watershed event has been noted in the past by writers such as William Kintner; as well as the tendency for opinion to gyrate rapidly once it is set in motion [Ref. 55: p. 142]. However, while support for arms sales also peaked in 1980, the degree of change is quite different. Additionally, support for arms sales was never nearly as low (or as high) as concern over foreign affairs.

b. Economic Concerns

Economic bad news of some sort or another (C.P.I. up, unemployment up, etc.) appears throughout the aforelisted chronology. Interestingly though, the slope of the economic concern line is generally the reverse of the foreign affairs concern trend line. Notably, only in 1980 did concern over the economy drop below concern over foreign affairs.

Economic concern can be seen as, at best, inversely correlated to arms sales support. If this is true, linking arms sales policy to support of the U.S. economy, would not appear to be a good way to gain public support. Efforts to garner backing for U.S. arms sales by arguing that they create jobs and bolster industrial output appear to be a waste of time.

In terms testing the hypothesis then, no dependable relationship can be directly discerned. As Figure 3.3 shows, the divergences are large between the two trend lines and they do not slope in a similar manner.

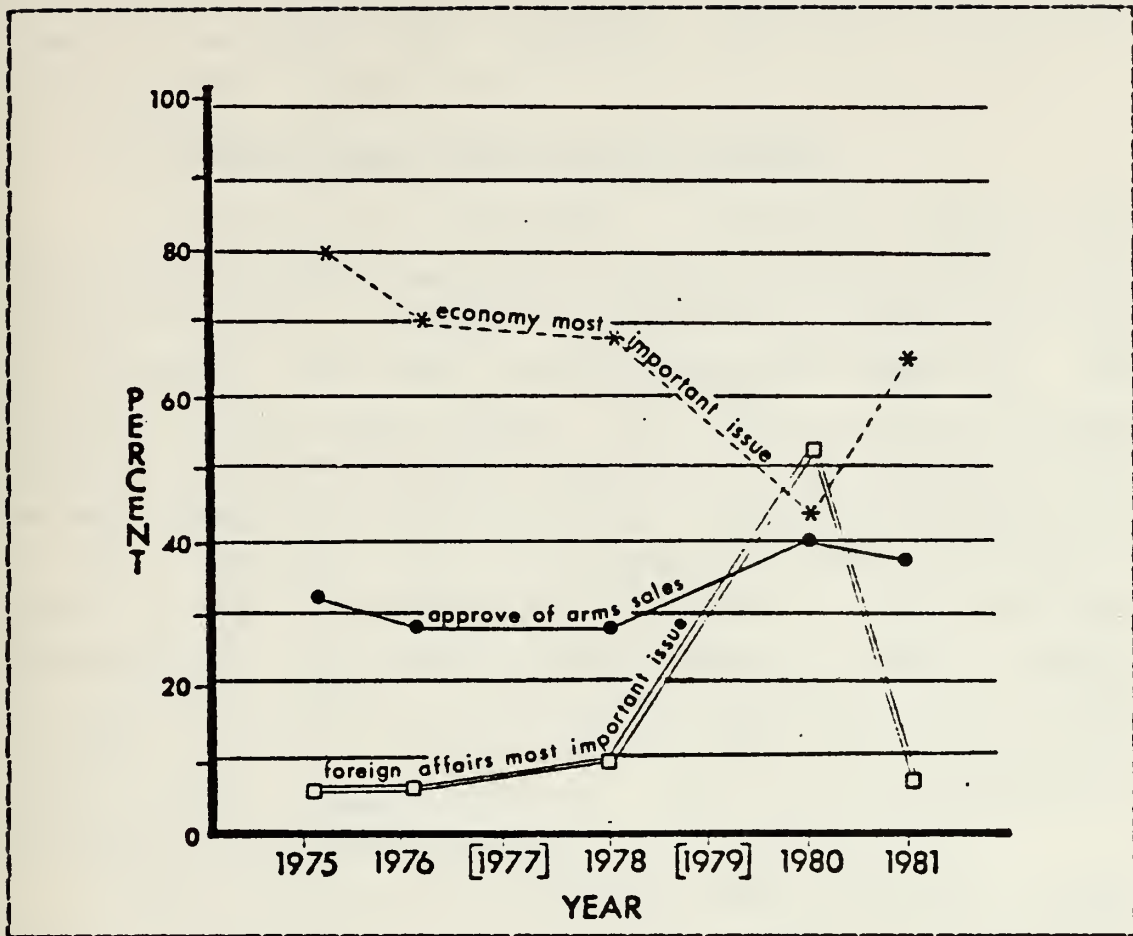


Figure 3.3 Sales Support/Foreign-Economic Concern Graph.

c. Interpretation

Although they are easily and often measured, concerns about foreign affairs and the economy do not provide a bellwether by which the degree of support for arms sales can be predicted. While significant changes have occurred in public opinion on the arms sale question, it in no way approaches the rollercoaster ride that changes in the two more general public concerns have taken. Given the kinds of problems that occurred during the baseline years, it is questionable whether the arms sale issue is effected

by the kind of emotionally charged, "problem of the moment" type of sentiment that questions about the economy or foreign affairs might evoke.

4. War/Less Peace Issue as an Indicator

As Figure 3.4 indicates, a decline occurred from 1975 through 1978 in American worries over the prospects for a peaceful world. In 1975, the Vietnam conflict was over and "detente" with the USSR was strongly supported. The Helsinki Charter was signed. The year of the American Bicentennial brought another treaty with the Soviets and the optimism generated by a year long anniversary celebration. In 1977, President Carter continually sounded the themes of peace and morality throughout the nation. 1978 marked the signing of the Camp David peace accords by Egypt, Israel, and the U.S., plus the official recognition of the People's Republic of China. These events overshadowed many others that may have raised concerns, such as the fighting in Nicaragua and Ethiopia/Somalia.

The uproar in Iran and the murder of the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan in early 1979 probably influenced the decline in the majority sentiment that war was not likely and that the world would be peaceful. Subsequently, the fall of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, the "discovery" of Soviet troops in Cuba, the U.S. embassy seizure in Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan explain the real turn-about of opinion. 1980 was merely a continuation of 1979 in terms of confrontation and conflict.

Then, in 1981, emphasis on the defense issue by President Reagan contributed to the creation of a feeling that the U.S. was back in control of its own destiny. This was, no doubt, aided by the euphoria and relief created by the release of the American hostages in Iran. The U.S. downing of two Libyan jets could only reinforce the general perception that the slide into chaos was ending.

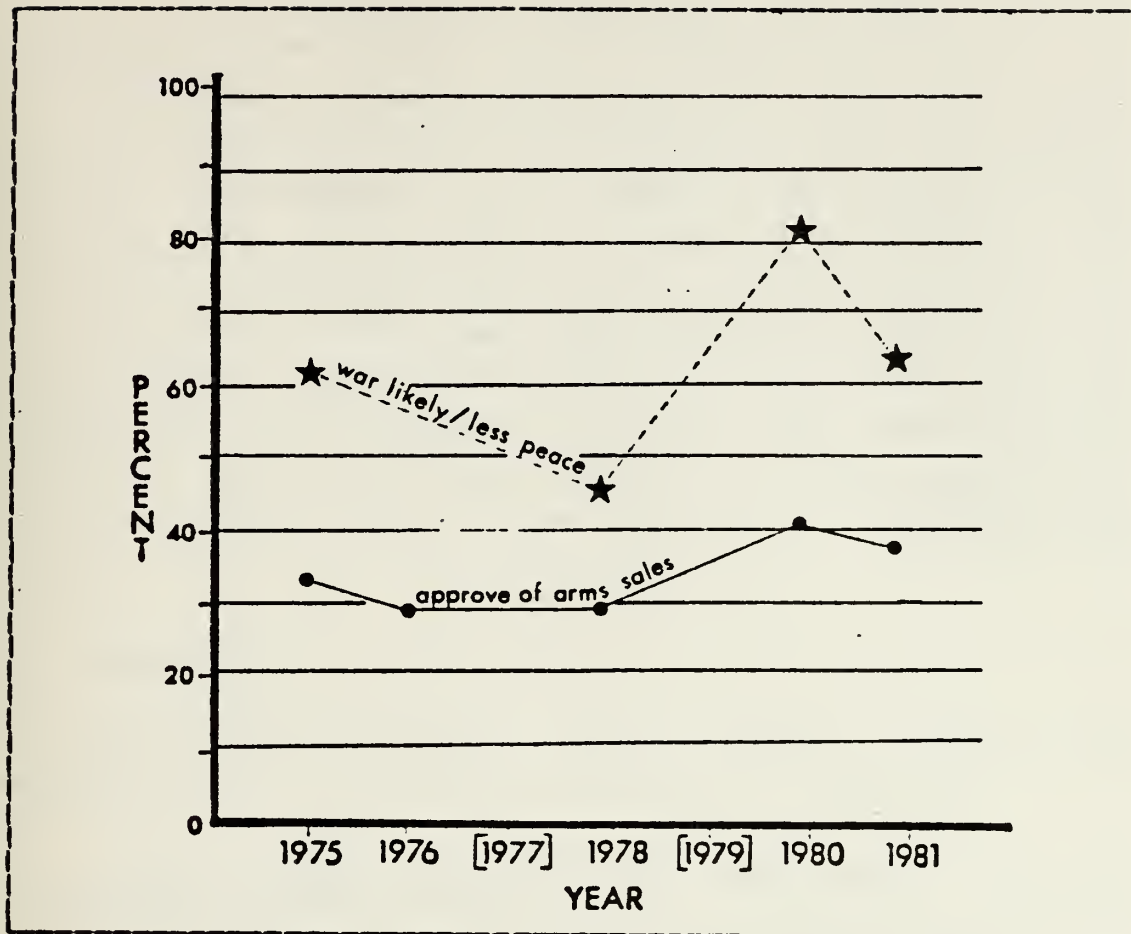


Figure 3.4 Sales Support/War or Less Peace Graph.

a. Interpretation

As was the case when sampling opinion on whether the government should do more about defense, the trend line in Figure 3.4 representing concerns over war and peace tends to slope in a manner similar to the arms sales support line. Without a data point for 1976, it cannot be positively determined if the slope for the period 1976 through 1978 would have flattened out. The events of that time period could certainly be interpreted to support such a supposition.

It should be noted that the steep drop in concern about war in 1981 was not matched by as steep a drop (a statistically significant, but small, 3 percent) in the arms sale support trend. This is possibly due to President Reagan's announcement of a changed arms sales policy, casting such transactions in a more positive light than previously. This situation may then be seen as a reverse of the situation in 1975, when mostly negative statements about arms sales may have skewed the support trend in a downward direction. It is obvious, however, that any hypothesis projecting when or how public support for arms sales can be increased should include some facet of the war/less peace issue.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Two specific questions (among others) remain to be answered from the preceeding discussion. They are:

- 1) Can a means of increasing public support for an unpopular policy be found?
- 2) Was the hypothesis on arms sales support true?

Taking the latter question first, let us consider the answers.

1. Evaluating the Hypothesis

It was evident after examining the available data that the hypothesis relating public support of arms sales to the perception of East-West tension was not supported by the evidence. The trends of opinion for the two variables are not similar enough to prove the hypothesis true. Alternatively though, the trends of opinion reflecting desires to see more efforts made on defense and levels of concern over the possibility of war appeared to mirror the

trend of arms sales support after other influences were accounted for.

The desire to have the government do more on defense is logically tied to the concern that war or unrest is likely. Accepting this combination of two factors, a new hypothesis pertaining to arms sale support can be stated thusly:

U.S. public attitudes towards arms sales are directly related to concerns about the increased likelihood of war and the need for defense. When support for defense efforts rises, so does support for arms sales.

The limited amount of baseline data and the requirement for several assumptions to be made would make classifying the above statement as more than a hypothesis questionable. This, as previously noted, is a problem that often occurs when dealing with "old" public opinion data. The new hypothesis does, however, both fit the available data and lend itself to logical acceptance.

To quickly test the revised hypothesis, we must shift the focus of this discussion somewhat. Consider the survey data in Chapter 3 regarding arms sales to foreign countries. It shows that only arms sales to England were supported by over 50 percent of those surveyed no matter what the general level of support for arms sales was.

Since at least World War I, most Americans have considered England as a loyal friend and ally, a country whose continued existence was important to our own way of life. It is logical to assume that this attitude influenced support for arms sales to England. In fact, the support for arms sales in general peaked the same year that arms sales support for England peaked; i.e., 1980.

By implication, selling arms may then be more acceptable to the public when such sales are seen as a means to

provide those countries considered to be important and sympathetic with U.S. interests with a means to better protect themselves in troubled times. By strengthening friends and allies, stability can then be found in the midst of turmoil and the risk of war decreased.

It is also noteworthy that the support for arms sales to most of the countries listed in subsection B-1 peaked in the maximum crisis year of 1980. Could it be that the definition of "friends and allies" becomes somewhat less well defined when war is involved? In any event, this only tends to support the efficacy of the reformulated hypothesis as a barometer of public support for arms sales. The conclusion can also be drawn that if the desire for increased emphasis on national security is strongly manifested by the public, those issues they may consider related to achieving that end, such as arms sales, will also receive greater support.

2. Increasing Public Opinion Support for Unpopular Policies

The direct answer to the question of whether public opinion support can be increased in cases such as the one above appears to be "yes". However, one can better evaluate the consequences of attempting to obtain public opinion support for unpopular policies after considering the case set forth in the next chapter. That case includes characteristics of importance and complexity that, rightly or wrongly, are not normally associated with arms sales. Additionally, it leads to a consideration of the third question posed in Chapter One.

IV. PRESENTING A COMPLEX POLICY--THE MX MISSILE CASE

If one wishes to consider a strategic policy case with intricate underpinnings, the advent of atomic weaponry created a perfect opportunity. There can be no doubt that the content of American nuclear strategy is complex. A public opinion poll conducted in May 1982 revealed that only 35 percent of those surveyed thought that the public could understand just the issues involved in the concept of a joint U.S./Soviet nuclear weapons "freeze" [Ref. 56], which is but a single factor in the current overall strategy planning equation.

Paradoxically, this recognized complexity does not necessarily mean that the public will not form strong opinions about nuclear strategy.⁸ Quoting Edward L. Bernays, "...the fact [is] that persons who have little knowledge of a subject almost invariably form definite and positive judgements upon the subject." [Ref. 57: p. 63]

Since there is a fairly large amount of media attention being paid to nuclear issues, this means that the public will almost inevitably have an opinion on nuclear strategy. This rather difficult situation creates distinct difficulties for policymakers. They cannot expect the complexity of the subject or the strategic nature of nuclear weaponry to serve as a shield from the influence of public opinion [Ref. 58: p. 243]. Further, as has been established, public opinion cannot long be ignored by those in power.

⁸This also raises a question as to whether the public might view national security related issues differently than issues with a purely domestic content. A consideration of this can be found in Edward J. Laurance's "The Changing Role of Congress in Defense Policy-Making," Journal of Conflict Resolution, June 1976, which also provides further reference material on this subject.

For some, the idea of public input to strategic planning may seem to be a new concept. For example, the following item was contained in a recent newspaper story about university commencement speakers:

Dan Rather, anchor and managing editor of the CBS Evening News, told graduates at Boston University that nuclear-weapons control no longer is the province of heads of state and strategic planners but has become a grass-roots concern. [Ref. 59: p. 5L]

The importance and impact of public opinion on the strategic planning process has, however, been recognized by some strategists for quite some time. The following rather lengthy quote from Bernard Brodie, while it speaks of war strategy rather than nuclear strategy per se, eloquently describes this point:

The idea persists that strategy can be comprehensible only to people who wear uniforms. Yet for better or worse, the layman plays a great part in determining the military strategy of a nation. In a democracy in wartime he rightly insists on speaking his mind, and he probably underestimates the degree to which military and political leaders respond to his demands. His very optimism or despondency creates situations which the authorities cannot afford to ignore. Prior to the outbreak of war he elects to office politicians whose policies may either further or hopelessly compromise the country's security, or at least greatly affect the price of victory.

(The above paragraph applied as much to the Vietnam situation of the 1960s and early 1970s as it does to the current concern about nuclear warfare.)

I should be loath, however, to leave the impression that civilian influence upon the determination of strategy is in any sense regrettable. Clemenceau had good enough reasons for his famous statement that "War is too important to be left to the generals." The greatest generals have themselves expressed that very opinion. Everyone is familiar with the dictum of Clausewitz that war is a continuation of politics, but its implications are not so generally recognized. Yet we have on the authority of that great philosopher of war himself just what he meant by it.

"To leave a great military enterprise," he said, "or the plan for one to a purely military judgement and decision is a distinction that cannot be allowed...and when people speak, as they often do, of the prejudicial influence of policy [i.e. politicians] on the conduct of a war, they say in reality something very different from

what they intend. It is not this influence but the policy itself which should be criticized."

(While certainly applicable to nuclear planning today, Clausewitz has here also managed to highlight problems relating to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Grenada.)

For a democracy, the corollary of that idea can be best expressed in the words of Captain Russell Grenfell of the British Navy: "Though the Government may often be forced by the exigencies of the case to come to vital decisions concerning the conduct of the war without previously taking the public into its confidence...it will be greatly strengthened in making those decisions if it can feel that it has behind it an instructed public opinion on strategical matters; a public opinion which is capable of forming a just and reliable estimate of the soundness or otherwise of the strategy adopted as it is seen to develop." [Ref. 60: pp. vii-ix] (emphasis and brackets quoted, parenthetical comments mine.)

Just a year after Brodie's comment was made, Edward Mead Earle echoed the idea that the public is a vital part of the strategy making process. He tied to this a necessity for continually attending to the inclusion of the public in that process as a means for furthering the national interest. Earle said that:

Strategy...is not merely a concept of wartime, but is an inherent element of statecraft at all times... [Ref. 61: p. vii]

Then he invoked the name of Walter Lippmann before he continued his remarks by saying:

The very existence of a nation depends upon its concept of the national interest and the means by which the national interest is promoted; therefore it is imperative that the citizens understand the fundamentals of strategy....there is only one safe repository of the national security of a democratic state: the whole people. [Ref. 62]

How do all the above facts and statements fit together? Briefly, the issue of nuclear strategy has created a measurable level of public opinion. It is to the

policymakers' advantage to somehow inform or educate that opinion in such a manner so as to increase public support. If this is not done, then a nuclear strategy which the strategic planners themselves feel to be vital will have to be changed.

This answers the latter part of the second question at the end of Chapter One. Even policies considered by the leadership to be critical to national survival cannot be exempted from the necessity for public opinion support.

A case wherein an appreciation of this concept has apparently been incorporated into the handling of a matter concerning nuclear strategic planning currently exists and will be discussed later in this chapter. First, however, a brief overview of the origins of the case is necessary.

A. THE MX MISSILE--BACKGROUND & POLICIES

The possibility of nuclear war seemed to become a reality for Americans in 1949. It was in that year that the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb. Since that time, the United States has set forth a number of nuclear strategic plans or doctrines [Ref. 63: pp. 37-71] which have, for the most part, centered on the concept of deterrence.⁹

⁹A full exploration of the concept of deterrence is beyond the scope of this discussion; nor will its past effectiveness, current usefulness, or philosophical bases be evaluated. A mere sample of the vast amount of literature available covering the subject follows: Richard A. Brody, "Deterrence Strategies: An Annotated Bibliography," Journal of Conflict Resolution, December 1960; Samuel P. Wells, "The Origins of Massive Retaliation," Political Science Quarterly, Spring 1981; Bernard Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959); Colin S. Gray, "Nuclear Strategy: The Case for a Theory of Victory," International Security, Summer 1979; Jan M. Lodal, "Deterrence and Nuclear Strategy," Daedalus, Fall 1980; Donald M. Snow, "Current Nuclear Deterrence Thinking: An Overview and Review," International Studies Quarterly, September 1979; Herman Kahn, On Thermonuclear War, 2nd ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961); "NSC 68, A Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretary on U.S. Objectives and Programs for

In this section, the following items related to nuclear strategic planning will be covered:

- 1) Summarizing the current official articulations of nuclear deterrence strategy.
- 2) Discussing the centerpiece of that strategy: the "nuclear Triad".
- 3) Describing the history of a proposed new "leg" for the Triad: the MX (Missile Experimental or "Peacekeeper") missile; and also seeing how the rationale for building the MX in relationship to current deterrence strategy has changed.

The section following this will deal with the impact and importance of public opinion in the more recent iterations of the portion of the planning process that item #3 represents.

1. What is the current nuclear strategic policy?

In his fiscal year 1983 report to the Congress, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger characterized America's nuclear deterrence policy in the following manner:

The United States will maintain a strategic nuclear force posture such that, in a crisis, the Soviets will have no incentive to initiate a nuclear attack on the United States or our allies. U.S. forces will be capable under all conditions of war initiation to survive a Soviet first strike and retaliate in a way that permits the United States to achieve its objectives....our goal will be to gain and maintain a nuclear deterrent force which provides us an adequate margin of safety with emphasis on enduring survivability.
[Ref. 64: p. I-17] (emphasis added)

National Security, April 14, 1950," United States Naval War College Review, May/June 1975; Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, abridged ed. (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1969); Hans Morgenthau, "Will It Deter Aggression?" New Republic, March 29, 1945; and Glenn H. Snyder, "Deterrence by Denial and Punishment," Center of International Studies, Princeton University, January 2, 1959; and Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1974).

Secretary Weinberger restated the deterrence policy with a slightly different emphasis 10 months later. At that time he said:

Today, deterrence remains, as it has for the past 37 years, the cornerstone of our strategic nuclear policy and, indeed, our entire national security posture. Our strategy is a defensive one, designed to prevent attack, particularly nuclear attack, against us or our allies. To deter successfully, we must be able, and must be seen to be able, to retaliate against any potential aggressor in such a manner that the costs we exact will substantially exceed any gains he might hope to achieve by aggression. [Ref. 65: p. 3] (emphasis added)

The basic policy for deterrence expressed by Secretary Weinberger remained consistent. However, the reason for shifting the emphasis somewhat away from the survivability of the nuclear deterrent and toward emphasizing its perceptual impact on an aggressor will be explored later in this discussion.

2. What is the "nuclear Triad"?

When discussing how the U.S. theory of nuclear deterrence is implemented, the phrase "nuclear Triad" or just "Triad" often appears in the conversation. What is the Triad? What concepts and systems does it include?

By the 1960's, the U.S. had deployed three systems to deliver nuclear warheads to long distance targets. These were and still are: 1) land-based manned bombers; 2) U.S. based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs); and 3) submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). It was the addition of the SLBM capability that gave impetus to the formal articulation of the Triad concept in the late 1960's [Ref. 66: pp. 48, 87].

Since that time, each of the three types of weapons systems has been generically referred to as a "leg", no matter what specific type of system was actually being used.

Thus the earlier Polaris/Posideon submarine systems are being replaced by the Trident and the B-52 bomber is being supplanted by the B-1 as legs of the Triad.

It has been contended that the creation of the Triad was not due as much to the execution of a specific strategic plan as it was to the happenstance coming together of available weapons systems technologies [Ref. 67: p. 87]. There may be some truth in this, but nevertheless, the Triad has so far provided the kind of flexibility, diversity, and reliability necessary to make the U.S. nuclear deterrent credible. As Roger Speed notes:

Given the wide range of uncertainties about Soviet and American weapons systems, especially when evaluated within the context of a nuclear war, diversified forces provide a critical hedge against the catastrophic failure of one or more systems and safeguard the U.S. deterrent against Soviet technological breakthroughs. This diversity can also be expected to complicate the execution of an effective counterforce strike because the Soviets must use different tactics and weapons systems to attack the full U.S. force. Diversified forces also complicate the Soviets' defense against a retaliatory strike. For example, ICBMs and SLBMs reenter the atmosphere at different angles, can come from a wide variety of directions and employ different means of overcoming an antiballistic missile system. And penetrating bombers armed with bombs and Short-Range Attack Missiles (SRAM) present the Soviets with an entirely different set of defense problems. [Ref. 68: p. 19]

Whether initially accidental or intentional, the Triad concept has endured and will probably continue to do so. The rationale for its current existence is to a large degree generated by its past existence. The Triad makes sense now because it made sense before. It has become, to use Norman Polmar's word, "holy" [Ref. 69: p. 87].

At least one flaw, however, apparently exists in the current Triad. It is the nature of that flaw and the proposed means to repair it that we now turn to.

3. Why does the U.S. need the MX missile?

In the eyes of many, one leg of the Triad has fallen behind the other two in terms of survivability in the event of an unexpected nuclear attack. Simply stated, submarines and bombers are mobile and therefore relatively hard to find and/or hit in the event of a preemptive surprise attack. Logically then, the increased capability of the Soviets to accurately target the fixed ICBM sites (referred to as underground launching silos) located in the U.S. has raised questions about the efficacy of even maintaining them [Ref. 70: p. 2].

Modifications of the criteria for when ICBMs would be used in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack were proposed to correct the vulnerability problem. The so-called "launch on warning" or "launch on attack" plans that were suggested advocated the firing of the missiles before inbound Soviet ICBMs/SLBMs actually struck the U.S. This eliminated the possibility that our launching silos could be destroyed before we could mount a retaliatory strike [Ref. 71].

Such strategies obviously carry an increased element of risk. The misinterpretation of some "innocent" Soviet action, causing it to be construed as either an indication of an impending attack or an attack itself, could lead to the unwarranted and undesired unleashing of a destructive nuclear exchange.¹⁰

¹⁰An example how of this problem might arise is found in the following item taken from "Washington Whispers," U.S. News and World Report, May 10, 1982. p. 15:

Without warning, the Soviet Union on several occasions has fired salvos of missiles from operational silos. In each case, American sensors quickly determined that the warheads were not headed for the U.S. Still, one former top Pentagon official termed the tests "scary".

Since the mid-1960's the Department of Defense has recognized the potential problem of ICBM vulnerability. It has, however, generally sought a means to increase survivability by altering the weapons system itself [Ref. 72: p. i] rather than changing the approach to missile launch policy [Ref. 73: pp. 5-6].

But survivability was not necessarily the key rationale for deciding to replace the then existing ICBM force. As was the case for the other two Triad legs, modernization of the specific system was deemed necessary. A portion of the ICBM force, the Titan II missile, had been deployed in 1961. The Minuteman series of ICBMs, although subsequently updated, was deployed in the early 1970's [Ref. 74: p. 94]. It, therefore, was a design product of the 1960's. Not surprisingly then, the preliminary work on an evolutionary replacement for the Titan/Minuteman series, which was to be more powerful and accurate than the Minuteman, began in 1973 [Ref. 75: pp. 169-170].

By 1979, however, the concept of ICBM survivability had overshadowed the emphasis on modernization. As then Secretary of Defense Harold Brown subsequently noted in 1980:

Our most significant force deficiency in the next few years will be the vulnerability of our fixed silo ICBM's....but no sound technical solution was found until the MX multiple shelter concept was developed and selected in 1979....The great effort (and considerable cost) that we are willing to expend to ensure MX survivability is evidence that we plan our strategic forces in a retaliatory role. A survivable system is less threatening than the vulnerable one it replaces. [Ref. 76: p. 5] (emphasis quoted)

While other issues relating to force modernization, arms control, and deterrence were subsequently covered by Secretary Brown in another portion of the above cited statement [Ref. 77: pp. 6-9], the major focal point for the MX at that time was clearly on the need for survivability.

Nuclear strategy had been revised to some extent. It was not sufficient for the ICBM force to just be powerful and modern to be an effective part of the deterrent Triad. It had to be "survivable".

Debate did continue on the need for the MX itself. However, the major emphasis clearly shifted to determining how the missile would be deployed (or "based") to ensure its survivability [Ref. 78].

Under the Carter Administration, as mentioned above by Secretary Brown, the MX was to be deployed in multiple protective shelters (MPS), also called the multiple aim-point system (MAPS). Essentially, this system called for the periodic concealed movement of the missiles to various possible launch points. This movement was to be accomplished in an area so large that the Soviets would have to expend up to 23 nuclear warheads to ensure the actual destruction of only a single American missile [Ref. 79: p. 91].

Criticism of this method of deployment was intense. Arguments deriding its economic impact, environmental impact, actual feasibility, and real effectiveness as a means to ensure survivability were loudly advanced [Ref. 80: pp. 126-138].

With the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980, the MPS plan was abandoned. Nevertheless though, the basing mode for the MX, rather than the need for modernization of the ICBM force, continued to be the major issue [Ref. 81: p. 46].

The president subsequently decided to implement a basing plan referred to as "Dense Pack" or closely spaced basing (CSB). The Air Force described this approach in the following manner:

CSB is a permanent, survivable basing mode for the M-X...It gains its success from a combination of

superhard capsules housing the M-X missile in a cannister-launcher, and close spacing, which prevents attack on more than a small portion of the force at any one time. This is due to a phenomenon known as "fratricide" in which early arriving attacking warheads disable or render ineffective those that arrive later thereby preventing successful attack [Ref. 82: p. 1].

The practicality of the CSB approach was strongly questioned because of the unusual "fratricide" concept. Its implementation was halted by congressional action in December of 1982 [Ref. 83: pp. 5-13].

In response to this, President Reagan formed the President's Commission on Strategic Forces:

...to review the strategic modernization program of the United States. In particular....to examine the future of our ICBM forces and to recommend basing alternatives. [Ref. 84: cover letter]

The so-called Scowcroft Commission included the following recommendations concerning ICBMs among its findings:

a. Engineering design should be initiated, now, of a single-warhead ICBM weighing about 15 tons; this program should lead to the initiation of full-scale development in 1987 and an initial operating capability in the early 1990's. Deploying such a missile in more than one mode would serve stability. Hardened silos or shelters and hardened mobile launchers should be investigated now.

b. One hundred MX missiles should be deployed promptly in existing Minuteman silos as a replacement for those 100 Minutemen and the Titan II ICBMs now being decommissioned and as a modernization of the force.

c. A specific program to resolve the uncertainties regarding silo or shelter hardness should be undertaken, leading to later decisions about hardening MX in silos and deploying a small single-warhead ICBM in hardened silos or shelters. Vigorous investigation should proceed on different types of land-based vehicles and launchers, including hardened vehicles. [Ref. 85: p. 21]

It would appear then that the answer to the question: "Why does the U.S. need the MX missile?" is no

different now than it would have been in 1973. The old must be replaced with the new.

Is the MX really justifiable only as a modernization of the ICBM leg of the Triad? Is survivability really a critical issue if the current recommendation is to continue to use existing "vulnerable" silos for basing? Apparently time is still available to further investigate problems related to vulnerability and even come up with yet another new missile system. If so, why not wait? Obvious arguments to the effect that it would be cheaper and just as effective to continue to update the existing Minuteman missile system while waiting for the new missile [Ref. 86: pp. 11-12] make sense based on the Scowcroft Commission recommendations.

In fact, this whole situation suddenly seems to be one of the few "simple" issues of nuclear strategy, offering an easy and "obviously" correct choice based on cost effectiveness. ICBM force modernization requirements can be met at a later time with the proposed new missile. The system in place now is practically as good as the MX. Why waste money on an interim fix?

Yet, four presidents have approved or advocated the development and production of the MX. This seems ample proof that a number of strategic planners have advanced a convincing case to the strategic policymakers that the MX is vital for the nation's defense and is in the national interest.

Assuming the situation really is more complex than it appears, can enough public opinion support to ensure the continuance of the MX program be maintained? How?

B. THE MX ISSUE & PUBLIC OPINION

It is not the purpose of this paper to ultimately judge the value of the MX missile and/or its basing mode. Rather,

having identified the issue as one of strategic significance, we can now turn to the examination of what public opinion has been on the MX and related issues. Then the actions taken by the current administration to win public approval for the MX missile take on a new significance.

1. Published Public Opinion Data Related to the MX

This readily available data may be divided into two types: 1) the measurement of public response to the MX itself; and 2) public opinion on matters that might be related to their feelings about the MX. A sampling of both follows.

a. "Should the U.S. build the MX missile?"

The narrative summary portion of the ABC News/Washington Post Poll for June 15-19, 1983 contained an interesting statement. It revealed a change in the answers to questions asked of the public that were similar to the one above:

...public opinion on the development and deployment of the MX missile has turned around since the beginning of the year. In January the public opposed building the MX missile by a 51-to-38 majority. In our most recent poll, 46 percent now say we should build the missile and 44 percent oppose building it. [Ref. 87: p. 3]

The significant shift in opinion from disapproval to approval seems even more remarkable after examining item A in the following set of data.

b. Public Opinion on Related Issues

The below listed items [labeled (A) through (C)] refer to other areas of public concern related to nuclear weapons and therefore, by inference, could affect MX support. Because of this, they must be examined as some of

the factors that keep public opinion in what some consider to be a normal, but constant state of flux and upheaval [Ref. 88: p. 75].

Compare the statistical data in the quotation from the ABC poll above with the response recorded for the following public opinion survey question. It was also asked in June 1983 (data listed in percentages):

(A) "Do you favor or oppose the U.S. agreeing to a nuclear freeze with the Soviet Union--that is, putting a stop to the testing, production and installation of additional nuclear weapons by both sides? [Ref. 89: p. 1677] (emphasis added)

FAVOR	69
OPPOSE	22

The response to a poll conducted in 1982, however, cast the apparent conflict between the above two pieces of data in a different light. The question asked then was (data listed in percentages):

(B) "In thinking about the United States's [sic] national defense, how important is it to you that the United States produce as many nuclear weapons as the Soviet Union does...very important, somewhat important, or not important? [Ref. 90: p. 37]

VERY IMPORTANT	43
SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	35
NOT IMPORTANT	22

It appears that while many Americans favor a "nuclear freeze" (69%), a statistically significant greater number (78%) think it at least somewhat important to keep pace with the Soviets in the actual number of nuclear weapons available. This reflects an understandable desire to lessen the risk of war, but without taking the chance of unilaterally weakening the U.S. militarily in relation to the USSR. The distrust and dislike for the Soviets implicit within that response is also reflected in the data collected

in response to the following question (data listed is in percentages):

(C) "Would you be willing to risk the destruction of the United States rather than be dominated by the Russians, or not?" [Ref. 91: p. 31]

WOULD BE WILLING TO RISK DESTRUCTION	68
WOULD NOT BE WILL TO RISK DESTRUCTION	32

c. Assessing the Implications of the Data

Taken as a whole, the above survey information indicates a public desire for an end to the nuclear arms race (item A) coupled with the willingness to maintain the U.S. arsenal (item B) and even risk its use to defend the American way of life (item C). There would appear then to be areas that support for MX production could be built upon, if the strong but contradictory desires of the public can be satisfied.

What is not immediately apparent, however, is the cause (or causes) of the sudden jump in support for the MX program between January and June of 1983. As noted, support for the "nuclear freeze" was still strong at the time.

Was the shift a result of a conscious and successful effort made on the policymaking level to increase public backing despite "freeze" sentiment to the contrary? This can best be discussed after examining the information in the following subsection.

2. Unpublished Public Opinion Data Related to the MX

As was mentioned earlier, President Reagan had scrapped the mobile basing plan for the MX when he came into office. He had, in fact, made this a campaign issue during the election [Ref. 92: p. 9]. Mr. Reagan had not, however,

questioned actually building the missile itself. Subsequent basing proposals in 1981 by the President, one to use existing Minuteman silos [Ref. 93] and the other based on the "Dense Pack" concept, were turned down by Congress. Low public support for the MX program, which was in seeming disarray, could logically be expected.

Interestingly though, in April 1981 and March/April 1982, private public opinion surveys regarding the MX were conducted at the request of an unspecified U.S. government agency or government sponsored contractor.¹¹ The first was conducted while the "Dense Pack" basing discussion was taking place. The second was taken after CSB had run into heavy opposition in the Congress. Both point to specific areas of public concern that could be targeted to obtain and maintain public support for the MX. The actual survey results follow. Also note the way the survey questions are phrased, as it reveals a potential for "skewing" the responses given.¹²

a. April 1981 Survey Findings

The questions, data, analysis, and comments listed below [labeled (A) through (E)] are excerpted directly from the survey source [Ref. 94] :

¹¹All public opinion survey data cited in this subsection was obtained by telephonic request through the U.S. Air Force Office of the Special Assistant for M-X in Washington, D.C. Some of this data is deemed to be proprietary and none of it should therefore be reproduced for use outside of U.S. government channels without first obtaining guidance from the Office of the Special Assistant for M-X.

¹²This kind of problem is well recognized by the various public opinion polling organizations. See George H. Gallup, The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1980 (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1981), pp. xxii-xxxi for a discussion of this subject. While the methodology used by Cambridge Reports, Inc. in its construction of the questions found on the following pages is unknown, it is assumed that an effort was made to avoid a situation wherein responses would be "skewed".

(A) When presented with a basic outline of the MX Missile project and deployment plans, a majority (nearly 6 of 10) of respondents consider it to be a "good idea".

Good Idea	58%
Bad Idea	26%
Don't Know	16%

(B) The following question was posed to respondents and the responses are listed below:

"President Ronald Reagan and his administration are conducting a thorough review of all options for building the MX. If, after completing this report, President Reagan determines that the current plan to build the MX in the deserts of Utah and Nevada [i.e., CSB] is the best option available, would you be more inclined or less inclined to support it?"

More inclined	73%
Less inclined	16%

*Fully 85% of those who think the MX system is a good idea are positively influenced by this argument, as are 51% of those who think it's a bad idea, and 67% of those who don't know.

(C) "If you knew that the current plan for building MX represents the culmination of more than a decade of study, including the strategic and cost analyses of more than 50 different alternatives, by the Department of Defense, Congress, and independent scientific authorities, would you be more or less inclined to support it?"

More inclined	59%
Less inclined	23%

(D) Facts related to cost also sway large numbers of people:

"If you knew what, once the impact of inflation has been taken into account, the cost of the MX missile system is actually less than the cost of military defense systems built by the U.S. in the 1960's and 1970's would you be more inclined or less inclined to support it?"

More inclined	71%
Less inclined	16%

*Fully 85% of the MX supporters become more inclined to support it using the cost argument, as are more than 4 in 10 of those who initially think it's a bad idea and two-thirds of those who say they don't know.

(E) A similar level of support is achieved when the public is exposed to the fact that MX is compatible with SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Talks]:

"If you knew that the MX missile system would be built in a way that was compatible with possible future arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, would you be more inclined or less inclined to support it?"

More inclined	72%
Less inclined	17%

*More than 80% of those who think the MX is a good idea are more inclined to support it when given this information. Even more significantly, a solid majority of those who think it is a bad idea and two-thirds of those with no opinion, are more inclined to support the system when given this information. (emphasis theirs)

b. March/April 1982 Survey Findings

The questions, data, analysis, and comments listed below [labeled (F) through (M)] are excerpted directly from the survey source [Ref. 95] :

(F) The Issue Environment

We began our survey by asking respondents to tell us--in their own words--what they think are the two most important problems facing the United States today....jobs and the allied issues of inflation and the economy dominate the list. In fact, these "pocketbook" concerns account for 63% of all "first responses" and 38% of all "second responses". Immediately following these issues is a concern for "keeping out of war", and "avoiding World War III". This issue garners 20% of combined first and second responses and is the fourth most often mentioned concern on the list. Moreover, the sixth most often mentioned issue centers around "foreign" affairs. This surge of interest in strategic and foreign policy issues is probably a result of the recent events, heavily discussed by the media, such as the nuclear freeze movement and increased defense expenditures.

(G) "Some people say that in this time of high federal budget deficits, we can't afford to spend the funds to develop the new MX missile system. Other people say that since our present land-based missiles are vulnerable to a Soviet attack, we must spend what is necessary to develop the new MX missile system. Which of these two views is closest to your own opinion?"

Can't afford to develop MX	44%
(Don't know)	4
Must spend funds necessary to develop MX	53

(H) Our next question outlined the interim MX basing plan proposed by President Reagan. We explained that the President wants forty missiles to be deployed in existing missile silos and asked people whether they generally favor or oppose this interim basing plan. As the table shows, almost six Americans in ten support the President's proposal, with four in ten opposed. A scant 3% remain undecided on this question.

"Presidents Ford, Carter, and Reagan have all endorsed plans for developing the MX missile system, although they have all had different plans on where and how to base the system. President Reagan has proposed an interim method of basing the MX until a permanent method has been selected. This interim plan would include building forty MX missiles and placing them in existing missile silos. The stronger MX missiles would, in effect, be replacing the vulnerable missiles we now have. Generally, do you favor or oppose this interim MX-basing plan?"

Favor	57%
(Don't know)	3
Oppose	40

(I) Respondents were also informed of President Reagan's decision to study three alternate final basing modes for the MX while continuing the testing and production of the actual missiles. We then offered two judgements of this approach--whether we should or shouldn't spend any development funds until final basing is decided--and asked people which was closer to their own position. As the table shows, a slim majority opt for spending the money for testing and production, while 44% think we shouldn't spend the money until a permanent basing method is selected.

"The Administration has also proposed a further study on three different methods for a permanent way of basing the MX missiles. While this study has been going on, President Reagan has proceeded to spend funds to develop, test, and produce the new MX missile. Some people say that we shouldn't spend any money until a permanent basing method has been selected. Other people say that we should continue to spend money to test and produce the MX missile so that when a permanent basing method has been selected, the MX missile will be available and ready to base. Which of these two views is closest to your own opinion?"

Shouldn't spend money until permanent basing method is selected	44%
(Don't know)	4
Should continue to spend money for testing and production	52

(J) When the MX missile system is explained in the context of President Reagan's defense modernization program to help insure the survivability of our land-based defense forces, nearly two-thirds of all Americans say they favor it. As the table shows, exactly one-third oppose the development of the MX in this context, and--once again--very few are undecided.

"Part of President Reagan's defense modernization program is to build the new MX missile system. Most experts agree that our current land-based missiles are vulnerable to Soviet attack. The MX missile system is intended to make our land-based defense forces stronger and increase their survivability in the event of a Soviet attack. Generally, do you favor or oppose the development of the MX missile system?"

Favor	65%
(Don't know)	3
Oppose	33

(K) Almost two of every three Americans (65%) agree that continued development of the MX is necessary to insure a strong bargaining position with the Soviets on arms reduction. As the next table shows, one in three people disagree with such a contention.

"The Reagan Administration is currently planning to begin arms negotiations with the Soviet Union aimed at arms reduction. President Reagan argues that we have to proceed with building and testing the MX system because a halt in development of the MX would weaken our bargaining position with the Soviets. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the President's argument that we must continue to develop the MX system so that we can go into the arms reduction talks with the Soviets from a position of strength?"

Strongly agree	26%
Agree	39
Disagree	23
Strongly disagree	10
(Don't know)	1

(L) Knowledge of three Presidential endorsements (Ford/Carter/Reagan), and the consensus of several Congresses as well as the Department of Defense, makes nearly three-quarters of our national sample more inclined to support the MX missile. This very closely parallels the result we found in an April 1981 national survey, which asked a similar question.

"If you knew that Presidents Ford, Carter, and Reagan, along with several US Congresses and the Department of Defense, have all agreed that the United States needs the MX missile to improve our national defense, would you be more or less inclined to support it?" (emphasis theirs)

More inclined	73%
(No difference)	8
Less inclined	18
(Don't know)	1

(M)

Conclusions

All in all, a majority (53%) of Americans support the development of the MX missile system, though many (44%) question whether the nation can afford its costs. When information dealing with the vulnerability of the present land-based system is introduced, more people are moved to support the system. Of particular note is the effectiveness of information noting that three Presidents and a succession of US Congresses have supported the MX system as an improvement of the nation's defenses.

c. Assessing the Implications of the Data

The private surveys pinpoint the style of arguments and presentations that can build support for the MX. If given a "full" explanation of the MX system, the public was more apt to think of it as a "good idea" (item A). Beyond that, the knowledge that the MX plans had received a thorough review increased the inclination to support them (items B,C,H). Presidential endorsements of a plan were also valuable (item I).

General concern over prices and economics (item F) which might be tied to supporting an expensive missile system can be allayed if incorporated into the context of allowing for inflation; and the necessity of building a system less vulnerable than the current ICBM system (items D,E). In fact, spending on the MX can garner support even if a permanent basing plan has not been found, as long as there is a study going on to determine a basing mode (item I).

The public's desire to deal with the Soviet Union from a position of strength during arms reduction negotiations provided a particularly powerful way of

obtaining support for building the MX even during a time when the "nuclear freeze" was attracting heavy media attention (items E,F,K). Also still very useful are justifications related to ICBM modernization and survivability (item J).

The potential to create a "package" of arguments and presentations with broad public appeal is clearly identifiable within the above data. Such an approach could be used then to strengthen the strategic policies of the Reagan Administration and help overcome continuing congressional resistance to the MX [Ref. 96: pp. 1-3] by obtaining the impetus of favorable public opinion.

It should be reiterated here that the major object of the effort is to get the large, modern, MX missile "in the field" as quickly as possible to revitalize the land-based leg of the "Triad". The basing mode itself, so often the major cause of controversy, public misunderstanding, and delay, is, in a sense, secondary.

3. Putting All the Data Together

Considering all the data just presented, any expression of policy expected to gain, maintain, or increase public support for the MX program obviously must deal directly with some (or preferably all) of the following elements:

- 1) Arms control/"nuclear freeze" issues must be addressed when advocating MX production (a major point).

- 2) U.S. nuclear strength compared to Soviet nuclear strength will be kept in equilibrium.

- 3) Dealing with the Soviets from a position of strength and resisting any coercion by them will be firm policy goals.

- 4) The cost of the program is not unreasonable in view of the need for it as a component of the national defense (a major point).

- 5) Other programs to improve the ICBM system will continue, but the currently recommended missile is the

best available now and is far better than what is now being used.

Additionally, the endorsement of the president and implying that the problem was carefully studied before a policy was decided upon clearly aids in promoting national support.¹³

Now that a sort of "MX public opinion support checklist" has been established, there is another question to examine. Was this "checklist", or one similar to it, a factor in the current articulation of desired nuclear strategy?

C. THE SCOWCROFT COMMISSION FINDINGS

It cannot be proven (or disproven) that a synthesis of the public opinion data cited above (both published and unpublished) has been used by the Reagan Administration in its efforts to force final congressional approval for the MX. The published data was obviously available to anyone. The unpublished data was available to almost anyone with governmental ties. It was certainly in the possession of at least one agency (the USAF) that would be interested in seeing it used to gain public support, since the MX is an Air Force program.

¹³It may well be that the failure of former President Carter to gain the wide spread public approval for his MX basing plan (the "racetrack"), with the subsequent failure of the plan to achieve Congressional support, was given impetus by his rejection of the Defense Science Board recommendations. That board, which included a number of respected scientists, had carefully studied the MX basing mode problem and did not support the plan that President Carter set forth on September 7, 1979 [Ref. 97: p. 91]. This was followed by the President's decision to alter his own "approved" basing plan nine months later, again without benefit of a perceivable "careful study". The image being projected to the public was that the MX basing plan had problems that had not yet been resolved. This was not a good signal to send during the international and economic maelstroms occurring at the time (see the chronology in Chapter Three). To date, even though the Reagan Administration has changed its planned basing mode, an effort has been made to maintain the impression that the announced alterations were done after "careful study".

It can be assumed, therefore, that these data (or some similar to it) were made available to the White House and the Scowcroft Commission in an effort to buttress the campaign for the MX. If the Commission found (as have four presidents) that the MX is a useful strategic tool, then the statements of the Commission (as well as the actions of President Reagan) should reveal an appreciation of what would be necessary to gain public support for it. If so, then it could be said that a component of proposed U.S. nuclear strategy was being articulated in a manner that public opinion polls had indicated was acceptable to the American people.

It would be foolish, of course, to assume that an entire strategic concept would be based solely on what the policy-makers perceived the public would accept. However, the worth of Bernard Brodie's and Edward Mead Earle's previously cited comments on the importance of the public in the strategy forming process would be lent a great deal of credibility and the place of public opinion in the strategic planning process considerably elevated. The next step then is to examine what the Scowcroft Commission had to say from that perspective.

1. What did the Commission say?

In April 1983, after the ABC News/Washington Post poll showing less than majority public support for the MX, but two months before the poll showing a shift in opinion, the Scowcroft Commission report was released. As noted earlier, the Commission was formed by President Reagan after the failure to win support for previously proposed MX basing plans. It was to carefully study the options available and make recommendations, thus fulfilling a requirement of the "MX public opinion support checklist".

The findings of the Commission in regard to the MX/ICBM force are quoted below. Emphasis has been added by this author to indicate specific portions pertaining to the "support checklist". The numbers in parentheses following each paragraph refer to the specific points of the "checklist" that have been addressed:

There are important needs on several grounds for ICBM modernization that cannot be met by the small, single-warhead ICBM. (5)

First, arms control negotiations--in particular the Soviets' willingness to enter agreements that will enhance stability--are heavily influenced by ongoing programs. The ABM treaty of 1972, for example, came about only because the United States maintained an ongoing ABM program and indeed made a decision to make a limited deployment. It is illusory to believe that we could obtain a satisfactory agreement with the Soviets limiting ICBM deployments if we unilaterally terminated the only new U.S. ICBM program that could lead to deployment in this decade. Such a termination would effectively communicate to the Soviets that we were unable to neutralize their advantage in multiple-warhead ICBMs. Abandoning the MX at this time in search of a substitute would jeopardize, not enhance, the likelihood of reaching a stabilizing and equitable agreement. It would also undermine the incentives to the Soviets to change the nature of their own ICBM force and thus the environment most conducive to the deployment of a small missile. (1,2,3)

Second, effective deterrence is in no small measure a question of the Soviets' perception of our national will and cohesion. Cancelling the MX, when it is ready for flight testing, when over \$5 billion have already been spent on it, and when its importance has been stressed by the last four Presidents, does not communicate to the Soviets that we have the will essential to effective deterrence. Quite the opposite. (3,4)

Third, the serious imbalance between the Soviets' massive ability to destroy hardened land-based military targets with their ballistic missile force and our lack of such a capability must be redressed promptly. Our ability to assure our allies that we have the capability and will to stand with them, with whatever forces are necessary, if the alliance is threatened by massive conventional, chemical or biological, or limited nuclear attack is in question as long as the imbalance exists. Even before the Soviet leaders, in a grave crisis, considered using the first tank regiment or the first SS-20 missile against NATO, they must be required to face what war would mean to them. In order to augment what we would hope would be an inherent sense of conservatism and caution on their part, we must have a credible capability for controlled, prompt, limited attack on hard targets ourselves. This capability casts a shadow over the calculus of Soviet risk-taking at any level of confrontation with the West. Consequently, in the interest of the alliance as a whole, we cannot

safely permit a situation to continue wherein the Soviets have the capability promptly to destroy a range of hardened military targets and we do not. (1,2,3)

Fourth, our current ICBM force is aging significantly. The Titan II force is being retired for this reason and extensive Minuteman rehabilitation programs are planned to keep those missiles operational... (2,4)

...These objectives can all be accomplished, at a reasonable cost by deploying MX missiles in current Minuteman silos. (4)

In the judgement of the Commission, the vulnerability of such silos in the near term, viewed in isolation, is not a sufficiently dominant part of the overall problem of ICBM modernization to warrant other immediate steps being taken such as closely-spaced basing new silos or ABM defense of those silos. This is because of the mutual survivability shared by the ICBM force and the bomber force in view of the different types of attacks that would need to be launched at each.... In any circumstances other than that of a particular kind of massive surprise attack on the U.S. by the Soviet Union, Soviet planners would have to account for the possibility that MX missiles in Minuteman silos would be available for use, and thus they would help deter such attacks. To deter such surprise attacks we can reasonably rely both on our other strategic forces and on the range of operational uncertainties that the Soviets would have to consider in planning such aggression -- as long as we have underway a program for long-term ICBM survivability such as that for the small, single warhead ICBM to hedge against long-term vulnerability for the rest of our forces. (1,5)

None of the short-term needs for ICBM force modernization set forth above would be met by any missile other than the MX... (5)

...The Commission also assessed the possibility of improving the guidance on the Minuteman ICBM to the level of accuracy being developed for the MX. Such a step, however, would take some two to three years longer than production of the MX and would not redress the perceived imbalance between U.S. and Soviet capabilities. The wisdom of placing new guidance systems on the front ends of aging 1960s-era missiles is highly questionable. Moreover, shifting to such a program would not provide the increased throw-weight needed to hedge either against Soviet ABM improvements or against the need to launch satellites in an emergency. Most importantly, a Minuteman modification program would not provide the incentive to the Soviets to negotiate that would be provided by production of the MX. (1,3,5)

A program of deploying on the order of 100 MX missiles in existing Minuteman silos would, on the other hand, accomplish the objectives set forth in this section and it would do so without threatening stability.... Should the Soviets refuse to engage in stabilizing arms control and engage instead in major new deployments, reconsiderations of this and other conclusions would be necessary. (1,2) [Ref. 98: pp. 16-18]

2. Could it influence public opinion?

Obviously, the five elements of the "checklist" have been covered in the report. The concern for arms control is prominently addressed. References to the maintenance of U.S. strength and resistance to coercion are present. To deal from a position of strength with the Soviets, the already available MX is shown to be a necessity. The cost of the MX system is cast in the most favorable possible light. The MX itself is described as the best currently available program, badly needed to replace older systems. Yes, another system is needed, but it will not fulfill the present needs of the U.S.

Finally, upon receiving the report of his commission, President Reagan vigorously supported all of its findings [Ref. 99: pp. 1, 11]. By so doing he completed the final requirement of the "checklist". In terms of gaining public opinion support for the MX, no known effective key had been left unturned.

D. INTERPRETATION

Conceivably by accident but probably by design, a facet of strategy was articulated in a manner that was fully in consonance with public opinion. Does this explain why support shifted in favor of the MX after the Commission's report was released?

It would be naive to say it was the only factor involved. Be that as it may, the assumption that the public was made generally aware of the recommendations and reasoning of the Commission in the course of the extensive media coverage of the MX problem at the time cannot be discounted. That the content of the report lends itself to building public support has been shown. That the trend of support shifted is a matter of record. It is not unreasonable to infer a connection.

But how necessary was this apparent public opinion support building effort? Should the Administration continue stating its MX policy in its new form?

Consider the fact that a Harris Poll conducted after the Commission report was released showed 53 percent of the respondents were opposed to the MX [Ref. 100]. How did the Harris Poll differ from the ABC News/Washington Post survey which showed a plurality in favor of the MX? ABC measured opinion only among the roughly 86 percent of the respondents who claimed to know about the system. The other poll noted responses from the entire sample set, regardless of any prior knowledge. Even so, the Harris results represented a five percentage point drop in negative reactions from a similar poll six months earlier, while approval for MX rose six percentage points to 41 percent [Ref. 101]. Such differences can be significant when congressional approval for MX funds is requested, as the fight over the system is not yet over [Ref. 102]. The need for the White House to continue its efforts to gain and maintain support is therefore clear.

What is not clear is whether U.S. nuclear strategy has suffered because of all this. The recommendations previously cited from the Scowcroft Commission report at the end of subsection A-3 of this chapter were a compendium of the arguments for not building the MX. Yet, the need to obtain support for what many planners see as a necessary strategic program apparently forced the Commission to include them in its report, touting them as the necessary follow-ons to the MX system rather than as a justification for stopping MX production. Obviously though there is some merit in the anti-MX arguments.

The use of existing silos for the MX was not considered by some Commission members to be the optimal strategic plan. The mobile system was thought to be militarily better. As

was revealed in an interview subsequent to the release of the Commission report, "...that option was precluded, Mr. Scowcroft said, by 'the nature of the environment in which the decision was made.'" [Ref. 103: p. 1]

It appears that the decision has been made to get what is attainable to ensure the survival of the MX in some form. Public opinion must continue to be curried so that an appreciable level of popular support can be claimed. The elements of the "checklist" must and will continue to be emphasized. Secretary Weinberger's shift of emphasis in deterrence policy (see subsection A-3) from survivability to a display of national will to the enemy bears this out.

The need and desire for public support has been acknowledged by the actions of the policymakers. The problems of presenting the complexity of the issue to the public have been allowed for by selectively tailoring the content of the explanation to cover the areas where public concern is considered most probable. Thus, a means to create the most support is obtained.

Yet, this way of answering the question asked back in Chapter One, and alluded to by the end of Chapter Three; about how the support of public opinion can be obtained even in a complex issue; may be flawed. The conclusion of this paper will deal with that issue.

V. FINAL THOUGHTS, QUESTIONS, & SUGGESTIONS

The problem of gaining and maintaining public opinion support for strategic policies in an era characterized by the rapid exchange of information will continue to plague American policymakers. Some, such as historian Barbara Tuchman, would not consider this to be a problem. She contends that the public may be better equipped to go to the heart of problems rather than the policymakers. Tuchman feels that leaders may be prevented by the trappings of office from utilizing "common sense." [Ref. 104: pp. 1P, 3P]. Richard Pipes captured the complexity that underlies Tuchman's phrase when he made the following statement:

...understanding, being a product of intellectual processes, concerns itself with ends, with what needs to be done; authority, on the other hand, involving as it does the management of men, belongs to the realm of applied arts, and tends to become preoccupied with means. Sometimes this preoccupation grows so obsessive that those in power lose sight of the whole purpose to which power has been given them. The more ambitious an undertaking, the more people involved in it, the greater the likelihood that overconcern with the means will produce stupendous mismanagement. (Hence Santayana's definition of fanaticism as "redoubling one's efforts after one has forgotten one's aims.")

All of which is meant to explain my temerity in presenting a critique of policies of statesmen whose intentions are no worse than mine, but who also happen to have access to information inaccessible to me. The great merit of free public opinion is that it acts as a corrective to statesmanship by raising questions of purpose, all too often obscured by concerns with implementation. [Ref. 105: p. 48]

If one can accept that the public itself plays a large role in determining the national interest, how can the policymakers justify tailoring their pronouncements to the people in such a manner as to gain public support? The argument that an undirected public mood is too volatile to

be of use in the policyforming process [Ref. 106: p. 376] does not recognize the strengths of the democratic process. The eminent public opinion analyst George Gallup, presaging the comments by Tuchman and Pipes, described the situation in this manner, even before the advent of truly rapid information exchange:

In a democracy such as ours the incontrovertible fact remains that the majority of citizens usually registers sound judgement on issues, even though a good many are ignorant and uninformed. [Ref. 107: p. 74] (emphasis quoted)

Lincoln's dictum on the necessity for public opinion support if a policy was to survive (see Section II-D) was probably not conceived with the understanding that the information available to the public was to be "managed" by the government.¹⁴ Nor does it appear that his statement, over time, has ever been shown to be wrong.

The public must support the policies and actions of those they have entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the national interest if those policies and actions are to continue. That the public must be able to

¹⁴Nor, in a related matter, does the news media have a right to selectively present information in order to advocate certain positions. See Ernest W. Lefever, "The Prestige Press, Foreign Policy, and American Survival," *Orbis*, Spring 1976; Michael A. Ledeen, "Learning to Say 'No' to the Press," *Public Interest*, Fall 1983; and William A. Henry, III, "Journalism Under Fire," *Time*, December 12, 1983 for discussions of this aspect of public opinion manipulation and the rise of the "media elite". Additionally, government sensitivity to the impact of the media on public opinion was highlighted during the recent U.S. military action in Grenada. For a sampling of the various viewpoints on the role of the media brought forth by the Grenada incident, see: Henry Grunwald, "Trying to Censor Reality," *Time*, November 7, 1983; George F. Will, "The Price of Power," *Newsweek*, November 7, 1983; Jonathan Friendly, "Panel of Officers and Journalists to Review Grenada Press Limits," *New York Times*, November 7, 1983; and Caspar Weinberger, "Secrecy is sometimes the best policy," (written for the *Los Angeles Times*) *San Jose Mercury News*, November 13, 1983. See also Thomas Griffith, "Who Elected CBS?" *Time*, April 4, 1983. A detailed further exploration of this subject would obviously be of value.

obtain sufficient information to be able to discern, by whatever means it chooses, that the national interest is being served is obvious.

In writing his opinion in the celebrated "Pentagon Papers" case, Supreme Court Justice Hugo L. Black noted:

Secrecy in government is fundamentally undemocratic, perpetuating bureaucratic errors. Open debate and discussion of public issues are vital to our national health. [Ref. 108]

Legitimate security concerns notwithstanding, proponents of the concepts of obscuring or even "stonewalling" an issue that has become a matter of public attention have short memories. Others have also felt that such tactics will ultimately cause the public to forget about a particular situation, allowing "business as usual" to continue. The end of the Nixon Presidency shows the final result of the loss of public support for policies and actions that are perceived to be unacceptable.

To increase public support for its strategic concepts and to ensure their continuation, it is not necessary however that the policymakers articulate or formulate their plans in a manner slavishly attuned to public opinion. Rather, policymaking must reflect a greater appreciation of the mood of the people along with some respect for their common sense. Events and pronouncements may alter the public mood, but to disregard the public's ability to think for itself is to risk the loss of support for, and the final destruction of, policies that the government feels are vital.

In the case of arms sales, what means exists to increase support for this unpopular issue? What must the government do since it deems the policy to be in the national interest?

Return to the investigation of arms sales support. Andrew J. Pierre's comments cited in Chapter Three were confirmed. Public support for arms sales in general has been low. In fact, it has never gone above 40 percent. The key to the problem of gaining the desired majority of public opinion support can be discovered, however, by looking at another set of statistics.

Looking back at the statistics for the years 1975, 1976, and 1978, one can see that adding the percentage of people who would support arms sales on an "IT DEPENDS" basis to the percentage of those who generally found arms sales acceptable, yields an interesting result. In all three cases, the sum almost counterbalances, and in one case exceeds, the percentage of those opposed to any arms sales. For 1980 and 1981, the sums far exceed the percentage of those opposed. For the entire eight year span, an additional 13 to 21 percent of the public was amenable to arms sales providing certain conditions were met.

If such is the case, the Reagan Administration can expect more public support for its arms sale policy if it continues to relate that policy to the maintenance of world stability as it relates to the United States. While some effort has apparently been made in the formulation of the policy to accomplish this [Ref. 109], the question becomes whether the right general audience has been targeted.

With a concerted effort to convince the sizable group who already conditionally support arms sales that a broader approach is needed to insure U.S. security and world peace, the potential to gain a majority of support exists. Attaining such a demonstrable majority could effectively silence most critics of the president's policy.

The judgements to be made are:

1. Is the arms sale policy and its attendant strategy important enough to merit the effort to gain more public support?

2. Is the policy itself sound and could it stand up to public scrutiny?

In the case of the MX missile, the "public opinion support checklist" turns out to be little more than a restatement of the questions that Herman Kahn and Anthony J. Wiener tell us that any government should ask itself before acquiring a new weapons system. These are:

1. What will X do that the currently programmed U.S. posture will not do?

2. Why is it worth doing?

3. What is the impact of doing X on the U.S.S.R.; our allies; the "arms race" generally?

4. What is the cost-effectiveness analysis?
[Ref. 110: p. 82, Table V]

Surely the questions to be asked in both cases can be seen as pragmatic considerations.¹⁵ It is just that kind of pragmatic approach that has been expected of the policymakers by the public since the inception of the United States. And it is the pragmatism of the public in having that expectation that lies at the heart of Lincoln's dictum.

In America, where public opinion is so integral a part of the governmental process and where information can move literally at the speed of light, the basis for the policymakers' attempts to obtain public support should be a

¹⁵In a more parochial consideration, the U.S. Navy would do well to remember the necessity to ask itself similarly fundamental questions before fully deploying the nuclear land-attack version of the Tomahawk cruise missile. Vessels which have heretofore been classified as tactical systems will take on true strategic significance. Previously amiable foreign countries and even some U.S. cities may be reluctant to play host to such vessels. Arms control negotiations may be seriously affected. Terrorist attacks on ships overseas may become more attractive to forces hostile to U.S. interests. These potential problems must be considered in the formulation of a strategy for the deployment and potential use of such nuclear missiles. If this is not done, the public may be unable or unwilling to support that strategy should such difficulties arise.

reasoned dissemination of information supported by trust in and respect for the American people. If the perception of the leadership is that policy and strategy can or must be marketed like a tube of toothpaste, then the actual contribution to the national interest of those policies and strategies, and the quality of the policymakers themselves, must be questioned.

That the public's grasp of a problem or policy is deemed too general does not permit the policymakers to ignore the concerns of the populace. Such an argument is too easy to make if a policy is ultimately contradictory or not well thought out. In the words of Thomas Jefferson:

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.
[Ref. 111: p. 214]

Neither Jefferson's words nor the study of public opinion polls offer easy or foolproof methods for policymakers to gain or maintain the support of the public over the long haul. What is apparent, however, is that the speed by which information is transmitted in this "electronic age" places a far greater burden upon the leadership to clearly state its goals, and its plans for achieving them. Without so doing, the government leaves its actions open to misinterpretation by the public without the buffer of time to permit adjustments. Thoughtful, consistent, long term planning, well articulated to the public, must replace ad hoc problem solving methodologies.

To successfully meet this challenge can usher in new dimensions for the concept of the American democratic process. To fail to recognize the challenge as anything other than "business as usual" means that a genuine

opportunity to more fully involve the American people in the decisions that affect their lives will be lost and statesmanship will inevitably be replaced with salesmanship.

A. A NOTE TO WOULD-BE STRATEGIC PLANNERS

This paper has endeavored to reveal an aspect of the strategic planning process many might feel to be of little importance. As was shown by the two case studies, means can be found for the government to obtain public support without having to change its actual policy or strategic goals. By extrapolation then, the articulation of "the national interest" seemingly also falls wholly to the policymakers' discretion, as the public input to that process would also be malleable. The Jeffersonian model of a democracy nurtured by the free flow of information may have been overwhelmed by the vast quantities of often conflicting data now available to the public.

Yet, to accept this rather coldly logical assessment of the situation, which is attractive in terms of expediency, exacts a high cost. If the American ideal of government truly "by the people" must consistently be denied in order to obtain what is "best" for the country, then it must be asked just what or whose purpose is being served by the policymakers' actions. At what point does the unique experiment that is America become irretrievably debased? To accept the tactics of expediency is to lose the strategy of American democracy.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon the strategic planner to consider public opinion in the course of the planning process. However, as noted in Chapter One, just how public opinion fits into the decisionmaking system remains an unanswered question. It is possible this question is ultimately unanswerable. The impact of public opinion may conceivably

be like the impact of sunspots on an electronics experiment; somewhat predictable, not always significant, potentially damaging, but not to be ignored.

The assurance that public opinion does have a place in the strategic planning process, despite its amorphous character, does exist however. In one instance, it comes from someone who has just recently departed a position in Washington, D.C. that can accurately be described as being that of a "strategic planner".

Retired General Edward Meyer, who served as the Army Chief of Staff from 1980 to 1982, recently commented on a key ingredient for the achievement of U.S. goals and policies:

In order for us to be successful, it is absolutely vital that we have the support of the nation as a whole...
[Ref. 112]

Note that General Meyer does not refer to the necessity for the support of "elites", "attentive publics", or special interest groups. Further, his means of obtaining public support, at least for the military (and arguably then for all strategic planners as well) comes from the underlying concept expressed in the following statement:

To mold public opinion, we must be professional {in the art of war.} [Ref. 113] (emphasis added)

There is no mention of public opinion manipulation, media control, or secrecy. Rather, the emphasis is on "professionalism"; a complex concept involving thoughtful, logical planning with attention to detail, consideration of all "knowable" factors concerning a situation, an appreciation of what is "do-able", and an articulatable understanding of the goals to be achieved plus the logic behind them.

Meyer's statements frame the ultimate public opinion related problems for the strategic planner. They are:

1) Does/Will the public support the current policy, strategy, or goal? Does the public perceive that the strategy is being, or can be, effectively carried out?

2) If not, why? Just as importantly; if so, why?

3) If the public does not support the strategy, do they need a clearer explanation or does the strategy need to be changed?

4) If the public supports the strategy now, what might cause that support to erode or suddenly dissipate? Does this reveal a flaw in the strategy?

To be mindful of these questions is to gain the key to understanding the difference between the generally favorable public reaction to and support for the recent U.S. action in Grenada as opposed to the continued questioning of the American presence in Lebanon. Unfortunately, easily found or "standard" answers to these questions as they relate to a specific circumstance cannot be expected. The demonstrated dynamics of the public opinion forming process will always require the strategic planner to find new answers for these questions each time they are asked. But to have those answers will lead to strategies and policies which can be more constantly and consistently maintained over long periods of time.

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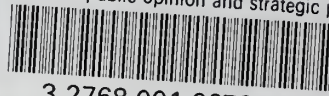
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